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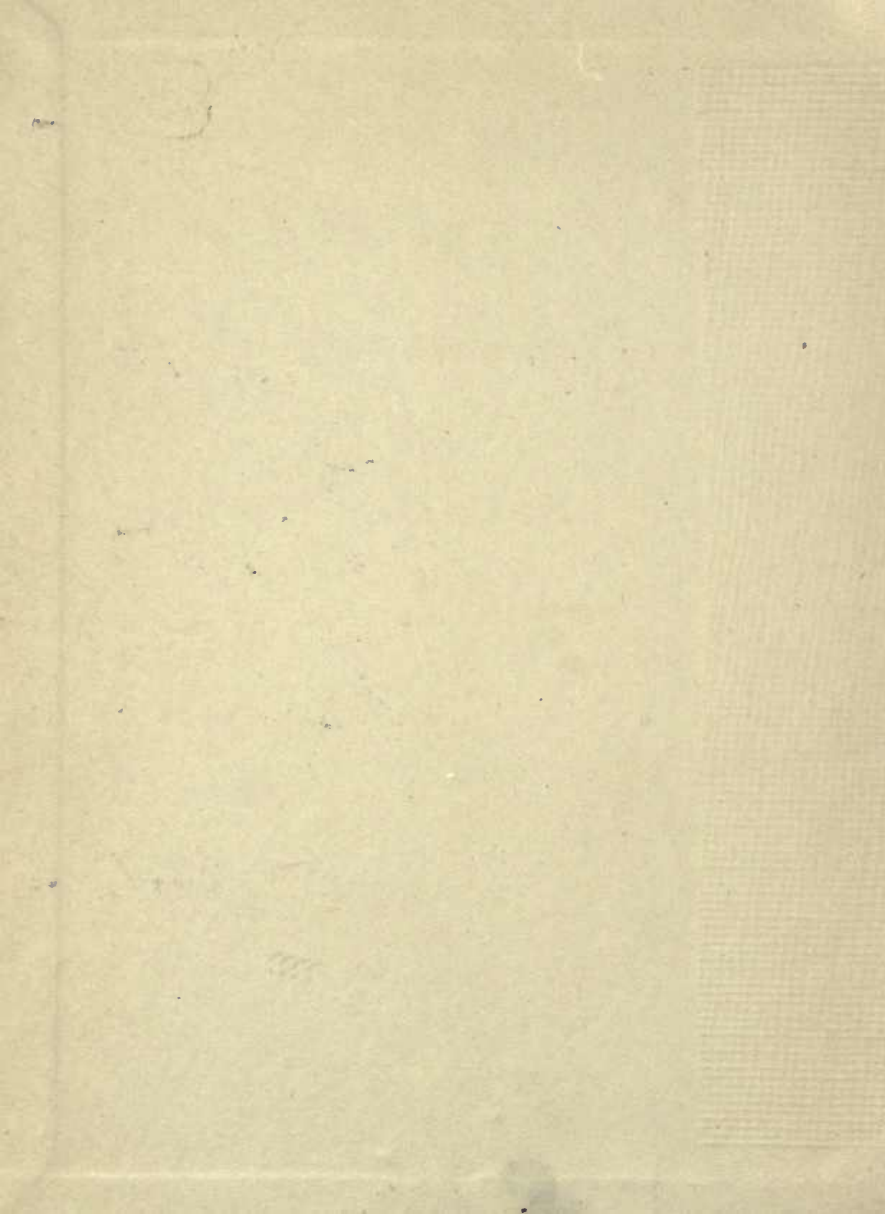


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Hearthside Sketches.



By Harriett Hunt Carns.

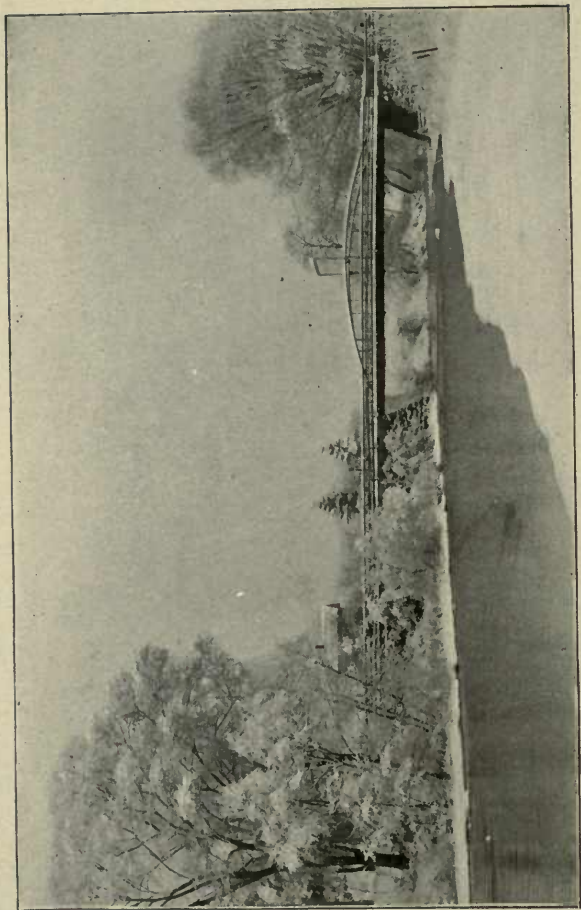


To

F. W. Weymouth
with
Compliments
of
The Season.

The Author.

Xmas. 1911.



A WINTER SCENE.

Hearthside Sketches.



BY
HARRIETT HUNT CARUS.
(ALAF DOUGLASS.)
(N. H.)



CINCINNATI,
THE EDITOR PUBLISHING CO.
—1900.—

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1900

HEARTHSIDE SKETCHES

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TO

MY LITTLE SON AND DAUGHTER

Whose quaint appreciation and unflagging interest,
have been my incitive throughout this work, this little
book is lovingly dedicated.

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The New Minister.

THE Churchill First Church had been without a pastor a year or more. It was very hard to suit everyone in that church, and previous experience had taught them the utter futility of expecting to keep a man against whom any one member could bring the faintest shadow of objection, either personal or professional.

They had been very unfortunate in their previous engagements, each of the many who had filled their pulpit failing to give entire satisfaction. For instance: The Rev. Mr. Brown was too practical, and dwelt too much on personal integrity and holy living, to the neglect of the doctrines—the doctrines were what they hired him to expound. Some one ventured to suggest a little different course to him, but alas! when he had complied with the suggestion, he found he had opened a door to a score more of the same sort. Deacon Jones believed in free will, and Deacon White in divine sovereignty, and the half distracted parson tried to harmonize the discordant elements, leaning first a little one way and then a little the other, to the utter disgust of first one and

then the other wing of the different members, according to which side he inclined. And so the last state of the man was worse than the first, for the different sections were unanimous upon one thing: A minister should be above all things else, rigidly independent. They had one weather-vane to their church and that was enough. And so Mr. Brown resigned.

After this came Mr. Darrow. He was everything that could be asked—eloquent, gracefully uniting theory and practice in a fine subtle way that offended no one's prejudices, but somebody awoke to the fact that this same subtlety of graceful generalizing was undermining the foundation of their faith, and heads were shaken, wisely, and " 'Twon't do!" was said more and more emphatically, and—well, Mr. Darrow had a call from somewhere about that time—and it was accepted! The church determined to be cautious in the selection of Mr. Darrow's successor, and each member generally, and the "leading" members particularly, had a nicely prepared code of qualifications—including theoretical, practical, intellectual, social and domestic qualities—they had severally resolved he must come up to, in order to obtain their suffrage. Strangely enough, their ideas on these matters didn't perfectly agree, and it was perhaps stranger still how many faults and imperfections the clergy were possessed of.

"I'd no idee," said Deacon Harris, "what a miserable lot of workmen the Lord had in his vineyard. It

seems a pity that he couldn't had a little of the wisdom and good judgment of the Northville Church before he give 'em a call." But Deacon Harris was terribly old fashioned in his ideas, and not at all keen in scenting out blemishes, especially in ministers. Of course an old foggy like this could have very little weight in so very intelligent and discriminating a church as the First Churchill. After several months of candidating, they at last settled upon Mr. Marvin, a man who at least had not the faults of his immediate predecessors, for one look in his face told you that he was fearless and independent, and would both preach and practice what his own conscience believed to be right. "At last," thought this perfect people, "we have a workman worthy of our hire." And so they gave him a reception, and introduced him to the "prominent members," and everything was altogether lovely—for six months. Then was made the shocking discovery that the Marvin's didn't own any silver,—to speak of—and hadn't any "nice dishes," and to crown all, Mr. Marvin absolutely refused to discharge an old and tried servant, when he knew one or two of the "leading" members desired him to, on account of some personal spite they had against her. This was the beginning of the end. Mr Marvin's antecedents were hunted up, the "specks" magnified in a manner that put to blush the most powerful triumph of microscopic art, and blazoned abroad with a zeal worthy of a better cause. In addition Marvin fraterniz-

ed with the wood-sawyer, actually stopping on the street to speak with him. Theoretically, the Churchill Church believed a minister should visit "the poor, the sick and the destitute;" practically, they preferred it should not be their minister. And so Mr. Marvin went the way of his predecessors.

For the next year the Churchill Church "candidated" to its heart's content, and when at last, with a considerable degree of unanimity, they decided on Charles Armstrong, there were many who felt a secret sense of commiseration for the young, untried man, who had decided to risk his fate where his older and more experienced brothers had failed.

Mr. Armstrong was a single man. This was a new feature in the experience of the First Church, and in certain quarters a somewhat exhilarating one. After the advent of Mr. Armstrong, the Churchill First Church congregation soon had a proportion of from twelve to fifteen females to one male attendant. A score of young ladies who had left the Sunday school because they were too old, became seriously impressed with the beauty and worth of that institution, and hastened to show their faith by their works, when Mr. Armstrong announced that he should give the school his constant personal attention.

"Plenty of company, now, Margie," said Deacon Harris with an odd smile, as his pretty grand-daughter, Margie Dean, slipped her arm through his, the better to

guide the almost blind old man through the pleasant meadow path that led from the rear of the church to the quaint old homestead where these two dwelt alone.

"Why, yes, grandfather," she replied with innocent enthusiasm. "All the girls are joining the school again—I am so glad! It will be encouraging to the new minister, I know he felt disappointed the first time he came into the school, he looked so gravely about at the empty seats, and asked 'if only children attended this school.' "

"And quite ignored my little woman, did he?" the old man asked with a pretence of anger.

"O no, indeed!—that is, he didn't mind me at all; it's not likely he should," she explained eagerly. "I am not a very noticeable person, and—I don't really think Mr. Armstrong has ever seen me yet," she added with a faint blush. "I came past Lucy Fuller and Julia Harper when I left the vestry to-day, talking with him at the library door, but I don't think any of them saw me." Then, with a little laugh: "You are not the only blind person in the village, grandfather."

"I know it, dear, I know it," he said soberly, "but I'd rather have a clear conscience and a spirit of humility than all their fine things. 'Man judgeth from appearance, but God looketh at the heart.' Always remember that, dear, and trust him for the rest."

"But, grandfather, I was not complaining," she interrupted. "If people don't see me only when they hap-

pen to be alone, or want something of me, it is no reason why I should be unhappy. It must be infinitely more trouble to them than it is to me."

Deacon Harris' face brightened, and his tremulous hand involuntarily closed over the firm little fingers resting on his arm.

"God bless you forever and ever, little Margie," he whispered in a husky voice. Margie smiled brightly up into his face, and opened the gate. At each side of the path was a row of sweet red and white pinks, and at the end of them, under the high, narrow windows, alternate clumps of daffodills and damask roses. All the rest was greensward, and this sunny June day, of a soft green, shading from dark to golden, as the sunshine sifted here and there through the branches of the stately elms. Margie picked a handful of pinks as she went slowly up the path. Her grandfather had gone on to the house, when a murmur of voices struck her ear, and looking up she saw Lucy Fuller, Julia Harper and Mr. Armstrong walking leisurely along the meadow path, almost opposite the house. They had apparently discovered her at the same moment, for they looked up and involuntarily lowered their voices. Obeying her first impulse, Margie bowed to the young ladies, both of whom gave her a cool stare, and the very faintest possible inclination of the head as they rustled on in their rich silks. A vivid flush overspread the pretty, sensitive face, and the sweet lips trembled a moment. Then a voice from within called,

"Margie," in such a strange, unnatural tone that everything else was forgotten, as, in sudden affright, she hurried into the house.

"Grandfather!" she called. There was no answer, only a faint moan from the kitchen.

A moment more, and Margie was kneeling on the floor, trying to lift the limp, nerveless form of her grandfather in her arms. He had been sitting in the doorway and had fallen back into the room, his feet still resting on the broad grass-fringed doorstep.

"O grandfather, speak to me!" she cried, breaking into tears, and again essaying to lift the insensible form.

"Let me assist you, Miss Dean," said a strong, quiet voice—the voice of the new minister—at her side, and without waiting for her to answer, a pair of muscular arms lifted the old man as if he had been an infant. Now where shall we put him that he will get the most air? Have you a large cool room with a bed in it?"

Without speaking Margie threw open the door into the "north-room," a great shadowy-looking apartment, in one corner of which the "spare bed" had stood from time immemorial.

"Just the thing, only a trifle close. Open the north window, please, and bring some cold water," he said, laying down his burden on the white lavender scented bed.

"O, Mr. Armstrong, is my grandfather going to die?" Margie asked sharply, her natural awe of "the minister,"

as well as her recent mortification completely swallowed up in anxiety and alarm.

"It is nothing more than a fainting fit, I am quite sure," he said, in such a quiet, assured tone that Margie regained her composure at once, and went quietly and deftly at work for his restoration.

It was time for the afternoon service, however, before he was so far recovered as to speak, though he smiled when his eyes rested on Margie, and pressed the hand of the young minister warmly when he took his departure, which he did with no small degree of reluctance.

"I shall see this picture before my eyes all service time," he said, looking down at Margie as she knelt, very pale and still, by the side of the white haired old man, who every now and then passed his hand caressingly over hers.

"If—if you could come in this evening," she stammered, feeling her face grow hot. "We are so alone here, though I never thought of it when grandfather was well."

"Certainly, Miss Dean," he responded in a hearty voice. "I should have come if you had not spoken of your need. I shall be very anxious about Father Harris until I see him in his accustomed place at church." Then he shook hands with her in such a friendly, cordial way, that her natural diffidence and dread of strangers quite dissipated, and all the afternoon there was a pleasant glow in her heart.

Twenty-five years before my story opens, Mr. Harris had been a deacon of the First Church, as well as one of its financial pillars. He had an unbounded faith in everybody, and believed all the world as honest as himself. And so, when Henry Fuller came to him, and besought his name to a note for three thousand dollars, he signed it unhesitatingly, and thought no more of it. Henry was a rising young man, everybody said, and Churchill was rather proud of him, and prophesied that he would be the richest man in town in twenty years.

Three months went by, and the good-hearted deacon had nearly forgotten the matter of the note. His son and daughter were married, and like the prodigal, insisted on having the portion that belonged to them. He had long before invested five thousand dollars for each. It was accordingly withdrawn and handed over to them on the day they left home to try their own fortunes in the world.

Another three months went by, when a startling rumor ran through Churchill—Henry Fuller had failed! And the man who held the note for three thousand dollars came post haste to Churchill to look after his interests. But a New York broker named Gripen, held everything in his possession. He therefore called at once on Mr. Fuller's endorser, and presented his claim.

"I shall pay it, of course, but you must give me a few days," the deacon said with a strange sinking at his heart, for he knew the old homestead must be mortgaged to raise the money.

From the mortgage of the farm dated the decline in Deacon Harris' fortunes. And after fifteen years of anxiety and struggle, he gave up the farm, though the pang it cost him only God and his own heart knew. He still retained the old farmhouse with an acre of ground, though but a pitiful caricature of what it once had been. After a few years his wife died, leaving him quite alone. He had long since ceased to be a deacon of the First Church, though the familiar title still clung to him. Younger and wealthier men, imbued with more modern ideas, controlled its affairs now.

After twenty-one years of absence, Henry Fuller came back to Churchill. The prophecy of his youth was more than fulfilled; and all Churchill went down on its knees before him. If anyone remembered the past, they wisely refrained from speaking of it, and Deacon Harris in his poverty was conveniently forgotten. It was a business transaction, and if the deacon had chosen to take the risks, why, it was only his own fault.

The deacon's children, in the meantime, had children of their own, and were engrossed in their own families and interests. John could not burden himself with an old man who might live to be a great deal of trouble. If his father "hadn't been a fool, he would have been independent, now."

Clara's husband had been unfortunate, and with a grown-up family of boys and girls, it was as much as he could do to live in genteel style.

After his wife died, Deacon Harris visited each of his children. It did not take him long to learn there was no place for him in his children's home, and with a strange sense of desolation tugging at his heart, the old man prepared to return to his lonely dwelling. Clara wept, and "so wished they were able to keep father," and the old man slipped quietly out and sat down on the doorstep, with his head very low on his breast.

"Grandfather," said a low, sweet voice, and a soft arm was thrown lovingly around his bowed shoulders, "do you want me? Can I be any help and comfort to you, if I come to Churchill?"

"You, child!" he exclaimed, grasping the little hand in both his own.

"Why, yes, grandfather, I am almost seventeen, and can learn to do anything—if I won't be a burden to you. May I go—do you want me, grandfather?" parting the silver hair with her slender fingers, and leaning over to look into his face.

"Want you, little Margie!" he cried, a sudden light in his faded eyes. "But they won't let you go to live with grandfather, dear."

"I shall go, most certainly," she said resolutely.

And this was how Margie Dean came to be living at Churchill at the opening of this story. There had been a storm of opposition, but she said quietly and firmly: "I shall go if you all disown me in consequence. I know it is right."

And now we will return to the "north room," and look after our patient and his anxious nurse. The sun threw a long slant line of pale gold through each of the narrow windows, and the quiet room was tremulous with soft light and shade, and odorous with sweet-brier, when the minister, returning, paused a moment on the threshold. How long Mr. Armstrong might have been content to stand silently and listen to the sweet voice of Margie, as she read in low tones from one of the royal singer's triumphant psalms, I know not, for Margie, looking suddenly up, discovered his presence, and gave him such a glad, welcoming smile that it drove all else from his mind.

When after the long golden twilight hour had passed, Charles Armstrong rose to take his departure, he felt a vague consciousness that whatever the future might hold in store for him, this day would be forever sacred in his memory.

It was known in Churchill that the minister went to Deacon Harris' a great deal, but for once this very keen-scented people were at fault. The possibility of his falling in love with quiet little Margie never once occurred to them.

But one day a thunderbolt burst over the village. Lucy Fuller was returning from the post office, when she met Mr. Armstrong riding in an open carriage with Margie Dean beside him, and the careless bow he gave Miss Fuller proved how completely absorbed he was in his com-

panion. I will not attempt to picture the surprise and indignation that convulsed the First Church of Churchill when this appalling news was noised abroad.

Poor Margie! how her gentle, sensitive heart was wounded at every turn, by cold looks and contemptuous smiles and vague hints which she did not understand, till some more spiteful than others, openly taunted her with scheming to entangle the minister, and ruin and drag him down by a mesalliance.

It was Lucy Fuller and Julia Harper who said this, and Margie's soft brown eyes held a pained and startled look, as she passed on homeward, those cruel sentences ringing in her ears. How chilly it had grown! she shivered. She was dragging him down. It seemed strange that she had never thought of it before. She thought of the bright future, upon whose threshold he had but just stepped, and her heart gave a quick throb of mingled pain and bliss. A choking sob forced itself through the whitened lips, but there was a new light in the brown eyes, and the glow of a great resolve made the pure, pale face softly luminous.

Margie was only eighteen, but at that moment her life looked to her as desolate—its bloom and sweetness as nearly vanished—as the dead summer over whose bier the gaily-colored autumn leaves were already slowly drifting.

That night the Rev. Charles Armstrong retired in a very un-Christian temper. He was vexed with himself,

with the First Church, and last, but not least, with Margie Dean.

“Who cares what the members of the church say, I’d like to know. I’m sure I don’t, and Margie wouldn’t if she loved me half as well as I love her. And to think how firm and determined she was! She would never be a ‘millstone about my neck’—what nonsense! As if she were not fit for a queen this moment! How pure and brave she looked when she said: ‘Because I love you, I am firm. I can sacrifice my love, but not your future.’

“My future! Well I shall resign, and I’ll do it to-morrow!” But he did not, he stayed and fretted himself ill, and was in turn jellied and dressing-gowned, and slippered by all the young ladies in the village—save one; and with the perversity of human nature, this exception was the only one from whom he desired these favors. But though Deacon Harris came to see him, no word or token came from Margie.

Mr. Armstrong grew in favor with the First Church. At last, after repeated failures, they had found a minister after their own heart. They had not enjoyed such a season of prosperity for years. The pastor of such a flourishing society should have been happy. And yet, I am afraid he was not—nay I am sure that the only thing that kept him from forsaking his admiring flock, was that once a week he saw Margie. For Margie was always at church, though (and it made him very angry) very little notice or attention was vouchsafed her.

Church aristocracy is the most cool, the most exclusive thing in the world.

But one Sunday there came a radical change. A stranger occupied a seat in Deacon Harris' pew, holding the hymn book with Margie, and when service was over, both people and pastor were much exercised by seeing him hand her into an elegant carriage, drawn by a span of beautiful, black thoroughbreds, with silken manes tossing from proudly arching necks.

While the people wondered, the pastor remembered the look of half sadness, half exultation, that crossed the faintly flushed face of Margie Dean as she went down the aisle and out at the church door.

There is always someone in every country town, who contrives to get at everyone's affairs, and with the most commendable enterprise (worthy a higher calling) proceeds to enlighten their slower brethren. Tom David represented this class in Churchill, and before the carriage was fairly out of the yard he had informed several that "that was the chap who had come after the Deacon and Miss Margie, and they were going to leave Churchill that very week. The stranger lived in the West and he was rich—shouldn't wonder if he was going to marry Margie."

The minister heard every word of the foregoing as he came down the church steps.

The short winter twilight was fading out in the west, when Charles Armstrong crossed with long, nerv-

ous strides the meadow, beyond which stood the Harris homestead. There was a glow of yellow light against the high windows, and coming nearer, his eyes rested upon the sweet face of Margie—his Margie! gazing dreamily into the glowing fireplace, her pure face bathed in its rosy light. In that moment, all the pent-up love he had been trying to trample out, sprang up within him, a very giant that would not be stayed.

Another moment and Margie's startled and blushing face was held against his breast, his arms folding her in an eager clasp.

"Margie, I will not give you up," he cried breathlessly. "O Margie! you will not leave me—you will not go away with this stranger?"

"If you mean Mr. Grant, both grandfather and myself have promised to go with him to his western home as soon as necessary arrangements can be made," she responded quietly. Charles Armstrong stood aside now, his arms folded, his face white and grave.

"Margie," he said, "I will not censure you, but I pray you may never know the pain you are giving me. I hope he may make you as happy as I had hoped to do—I cannot say more."

His strong voice faltered, as he turned away, but Margie sprang to his side, her eyes shining, her face radiant.

"O Charles! What do you—what can you mean?" she cried. "As if he—as if anybody could ever take

your place! And Mr. Grant has a wife and three children."

"Margie—my darling!" was the rapturous cry.

Well, the whole story came out after Deacon Hariss and Margie had been gone a few days. And this was the story: More than twenty-one years before when James Grant was a struggling merchant, there came a period of financial depression. He had no wealthy friends to aid him, and with sinking heart he saw one after another going down about him, and the way before him growing darker every day. At length there came a crisis—a day when hope died utterly out of his heart. Deacon Harris, then one of the wealthiest men in Churchill came into his office on business, and somehow succeeded in getting the whole story of his troubles from him, as well as the sum necessary to carry him over the chasm upon whose brink he had been standing.

"We can't have this, James," the Deacon said, smilingly, as he quietly wrote out a check for the sum needed.

The loan had been promptly paid within a year—"The debt of gratitude has been gathering interest ever since," James Grant said. It was by the merest chance he had heard of his benefactor's reverses, as he had been in business in Colorado for nearly twenty years. As soon as he had heard, he started for the East, and the result of this visit was the removal of the Deacon and Margie to his beautiful western home.

Churchill talked of nothing else for a month, but at the end of that time, it suffered a more startling sensation—at least that portion of it composing the First Church. Its eloquent young minister, who, it flattered itself was being trained and moulded to exactly meet all its wishes, very unexpectedly resigned.

Grief, astonishment and indignation succeeded each other in their hearts. But the measure of their tribulation was not yet full. Three days afterward Tom David came home from the city in a state of sublime beatitude, having in his hands a paper in which figured the following item:

“Married, in Greenburg, Col., by the Rev. Robert Graves, at the home of James Grant, Esq., Rev. Charles Armstrong, of Churchill, New York, to Miss Marjorie Dean, of Greenburg.”

The pastorate of the First Church is still vacant. Best of references required, and the preference given to married applicants.

Jim.

Jim might have been twenty or he might have been seventy, so completely was his face masked by its coating of kindred clay, and so effectually was his form disguised by the nondescript garments hung upon it.

Jim must have had a surname, and without doubt "James" was the title bestowed upon him by the happy mother when they "named the baby." Had she lived, she might perhaps have called him "Jamie," for motherhood strikes gentle chords in even the roughest breast. But she left him in his baby days; and those upon whom his care thereafter fell scorned all sentimentality, and dubbed him Jim. His surname? Yes, he must have had one, at least so the census taker told him at the same time he undertook to convince him that he must also have an age.

Jim listened attentively to his eloquence, but only answered doggedly: "Jim is my name, I can't tell you no more." And he walked away, leaving "the census man" to estimate.

Each Saturday night Jim's old roan horse might be seen hitched outside the village tavern, while his mas-

ter sat within, cheering himself with what comfort there could be found in its staple article—whiskey. It was an established fact that Jim could absorb more liquor than any two men in the village, but no amount of drink could loosen his tongue. He never treated, and never accepted a treat. He ordered his whiskey, drank it, paid for it, and then shuffling out to the horse, mounted and rode away in the darkness, to his home on the mountain.

Imagine a small clear spot surrounded on all sides by massive forest giants covered with many hued foliage, and intersected with countless thickets of underbrush, standing so closely together that their boughs interlace in a dense canopy, through which the sun never breaks, and where shadows deepen to blackness, while the sighing of the boughs above seems a fitting requiem for lost souls, and you have a vague idea of Jim's abiding place; a lonely spot for even a forest to hold.

The low hut was enclosed with slabs, from which the bark had never been stripped, and a whole in each side served for windows, with one in the roof for a chimney. The door was unhinged and lay on the floor inside. When it was clear, Jim left it down all night; but when it rained he stood it up before the opening. The floor was of clay, and a rude stool, a bedstead and some cooking utensils comprised the furniture. At the end of the hut was a shed, which seemed to have been

intended for a part of the house. It had evidently never been finished, for some of the frame glared naked, unmarked by a nail. A rude mass of boughs formed the roof, and in it Old Roan dreamed when off duty.

This was Jim's home. Not a cheerful spot certainly or one calculated to invite the weary traveler. It was a wild spot, but Jim's was a wild nature; and long years of habit had ripened in his heart a feeling something like love for it. For Jim had a heart; and once that heart had loved something better than Old Roan and the gloomy hut.

Several miles farther on the other side of the mountain lay a village called Glassville. This was Jim's native place. Here he passed his neglected orphaned babyhood, his lonely childhood, and in fullness of time reached man's estate. His manhood was the "ripe fruit" of his childhood—gloomy and reserved. He lived by himself, worked faithfully for his daily bread, made no friends, but certainly had no enemies. Thus he lived till his twenty-seventh year, and then by that daring inconsistency which belongs to natures like his, he fell in love with Nancy Harks, the belle of the rude village. Poor Jim! He hated himself for his folly; but he hugged it closer to him every day. The mad thought of trying to win her, or even daring to tell his love, never entered his head. He fought his passion silently and manfully, till at last, like all smothered fires, it

broke out one day, and he told her all, and in despair begged her to kill him for his presumption. But she did nothing of the kind. She turned first white and then red, and instead of plunging a dagger into his breast, she laid her pretty brown head upon it and whispered: "I won't, Jim—because I love you."

Poor Jim! He was petrified. He could not think. He felt her warm light form nestling on his breast, but he dared not press it closer, for fear the dream would fade away. But Nancy was more accustomed to such things, and slipping her plump arm around his neck, she put her red lips close to his face and said: "Don't look so, Jim. Ain't you glad?"

Then the full glory of his joy came to Jim. He clasped her tight in his strong arms. He kissed her with the hunger of a lifelong fast, and then he bowed his head over her and wept the first tears he had shed since babyhood. From that time he was a changed man. The freshness which his youth had never known was showered over him. He laughed, he danced, he sang. His very presence seemed to scatter sunshine. Nancy consented to an early marriage. Jim selected the little clearing, and began the little house for his bride. Many offers of help were made, but he declined them all; no hand but his should hew a log for the house that was to shelter her head, and his axe rang sharp and fast, and the hut approached completion.

The main part was done, and he had begun the lit-

the shed, which he, unknown to her, had added, so that she could have a kitchen, and a best room, and in the first he would have room to keep a pile of dry seasoned wood for her, so that she should never have her eyes spoiled with smoke.

He laughed as he worked on this, for it was a luxury unheard of in the village; but Nancy was a woman unequalled in the world, and four rooms would not be too good for her. The frame was up, and the clapboards had begun to make a show; one more week and it would be done. And then? Jim's heart almost choked him! and he whistled loud to swallow a sob. He worked hard all that day, and when the sun sank behind the tall oaks, even his happiness could not disguise the fact that he was very tired; but he whistled gayly as he picked up his coat and began his long walk. It was dark when he reached the village. As usual he went at once to Nancy's home. The door stood open, but no Nancy met him, and all within was dark. He hesitated on the threshold, and a sob came from the gloom. A chill crept over him. Could it be that she was dead? He reeled and clutched the door. It swung back with a bang, and a thick voice asked: "Who's there!" It was her mother.

"It is I, Jim. For Heaven's sake, don't say she's dead!"

A burst of sobs was her reply, and groping his way to her, Jim grasped her shoulder and pleaded:

"Speak Mis' Harks, or ye'll kill me. Say she ain't dead."

"Better dead! better dead! Jim, she's gone and disgraced us all!"

"How dare you!" cried he; "and you her mother!"

"And the more sorrow to me. You didn't know it, Jim, but that city chap has been hanging round for more than two weeks. I told her she had too much talk with him, but she wouldn't take heed. This morning she went off, and at dark little Jack Simmons came in and told us how he met her on the mountain road with that city fellow; and she called out to him and said, 'Tell them I'm gone forever, Jack!' and then the man took her in his arms and kissed her. O Jim! O Jim! What shall we do? And you so good to her!"

The echo gave back her words; she was alone. Without a word, without a moan, Jim left the house. He looked around in the bright starlight. All was strange. He saw nothing and he heard nothing but that wagon and the words:

"The man took her in his arms and kissed her."

Her dog sprang up and put his nose in his hand. He pushed him aside, and then, with his hands outstretched as if groping in the dark, he walked away toward the dark shadows of the mountains. On, on he walked, and in the gray dawn he sat in the door of his desolate house, bowed and grizzled as though by

years. All day he sat motionless, and at evening he heard the voices of his friends, who had come to seek him. He arose, placed the unhung door before the doorway, and put his back against it. In vain they pleaded with him. He was immovable. He bade them go and leave him to himself, and at last they did so. No news was heard from Nancy, and for awhile a surreptitious watch was kept on Jim; but as he declined to either accept or resent any attention offered him, he was finally abandoned to his fate. Years passed by. Jim never returned to his native village. He worked faithfully, but he took none of the comforts that his toil could buy. The hut grew dilapidated, and the clapboards fell off. He let them lie; even the door was never screwed to its hinges, which lay in the mould by the doorway.

Jim allowed himself but one indulgence; that was whiskey. As years passed by he grew fonder of it, and often on their return from town through dark and rain, it was Old Roan's instinct, and not Jim's hand, that guided her over the rough road.

One stormy night Jim unhitched Old Roan from the post and started for home. It was very dark, and soon began to rain hard. Jim was nearly drunk when he started, but the cold rain beating in his face cooled his brain, and by the time he reached the hut he was sober. He put Old Roan into the shed, and then cold and wet, he crawled into his scarcely less miserable shelter. For the first time in all those years he felt a chill

of loneliness creep over him. The rain dripped from his wet clothes. He shivered, and put up the door, but the chill struck deeper, and groping his way to the door, he gathered an armful of sticks. He took them in and soon a bright fire blazed in the chimney-place. It warmed Jim's limbs and dried his clothes, but it froze his heart. He tried to shake it off. He took down a loaf of bread and cut a slice. The whiskey jug stood on the table, but he turned from it with loathing. He tried to eat the bread, but it choked him. In vain he fought the feeling. The heaped-up desolation of all those years had broken the ice at last, and when Jim stretched his form on the clay before the dancing flames, tears glistened on his grizzled beard. He slept at last—slept and dreamed of the by-gone days, till he heard a voice cry: "Jim! Jim!"

He started up. The fire was burning low, and the storm raged harder. The past and present were so blended that nothing seemed real. He looked around, and his eyes drooped heavily, when again the cry came:

"Jim! Jim! For the love of Heaven hear me!"

There could be no mistake this time; the cry was real, and it was a woman's voice.

Jim sprang up and lifted aside the door, and there in the darkness, drenched by the pitiless storm, crouched a woman. Her long brown hair hung dripping over her slight form, which was protected by a thin shawl. She did not look up when Jim opened the door, but

crouched lower; and without a word he stooped down, and lifting her in his arms, bore her to the fire. The fagots shot up a fitful light. She raised her head. It was Nancy! Not a quiver shook Jim's frame; not a sound escaped his lips. He placed her on the only seat, walked to the other side of the hearth, and folding his arms, looked steadily into the fire. The poor dripping wretch watched him with eager eyes. He seemed like a man of stone; and clasping her hands over her breast, she cried:

"Jim! Jim! don't you know me?"

"Yes, Nancy, I know ye." But his eyes never left the fire.

She staggered to him and fell at his feet.

"Jim! for the love of the good God, have mercy on me! I daren't ask you to forgive me, but don't drive me out in the cold storm again. I know I don't deserve it, Jim, but have mercy on me as you would on a hurt dog!"

Jim's face worked fearfully. He lifted her up.

"Don't Nancy. It's all right. I know'd you'd come back sometime. It has been a good while to wait, but old Jim's here to take care of ye yet. Come, dry your clothes and I'll get you something to eat."

He put her seat close to the fire, and taking the loaf, cut a slice for her. She ate eagerly. Jim threw more wood on the fire and she hovered over it. The fire dried her clothes, but its warmth could not thaw the chill that

froze her. The pitiless storm had done its work. Her teeth chattered, but her cheeks and eyes burned with unnatural brilliancy.

Jim filled an old can with water and put it on the coals. It was soon hot. He mixed it with some whiskey and gave it to her. She drank it. It seemed to warm her chilled blood; her teeth stopped chattering, and her head drooped on her breast. Jim took his only blanket and spread it before the fire.

"I reckon I won't want it to-night, Nancy. You lay down on it and I'll keep up a fire."

The tired woman obeyed, and soon she was in a deep sleep. The wind shook the door, Jim got up and put a log against it and then returned to his seat and watched the blaze with a face as stolid as the logs he threw on, till the grey dawn crept through the chinks of the hut. Nancy still slept heavily. Old Roan neighed. Jim fed her. Still Nancy slept on, and Jim sat down before the fire.

The sun rose brightly. The clouds broke away, and the storm was over. Jim let the fire go out and stared at the blackened logs. Noon came; still Nancy slept, and still he watched, and when the sun went down he was still at his post. All this time Nancy had not moved, but as the twilight deepened she grew restless and moaned. Jim went to her. Her lips were parched. He moistened them with water, and taking off his coat made a pillow of it for her. She seemed to sleep soundly again. It grew dark and he lighted a fire—suddenly he

heard a voice call, "Jim." He looked around. Nancy was awake, and her eyes, like two burning stars, were fixed on him.

"Well, Nancy."

"Come here, Jim."

Her voice was husky. Jim bent over her and saw that the flush of fire had died away and a gray pallor was creeping over her. He felt a cold ice-like grip at his heart but he uttered no word.

"Bend closer, Jim, I'm going fast."

A great gulp of agony burst from him. "No, no, Nancy, you mustn't. Think how long I've waited for ye! Ye mustn't go so soon."

A smile passed over Nancy's face, and then she gasped. In a moment she rallied. "Jim, I must tell you how sorry I am. I was very bad—but—"

Her voice failed.

"No, no, Nancy!" cried he. "Don't talk of that; it's past. I don't hold grudges. Stay with me now. Don't leave old Jim."

She struggled and whispered:

"Take me in your arms, Jim."

The brawny arms were put tenderly about her and the pale face nestled close to the weather-beaten grizzled one.

"Jim, say you forgive me."

"I always did that, Nancy. I was such a rough fellow, you see; but don't talk of that. O, Nancy, don't leave me."

The eyes were fast growing heavy. One more struggle for words.

"Kiss me, Jim."

He kissed the cold lips.

"God bless you! Good-bye."

And with the dark story of her life untold, and that disjointed prayer for forgiveness the only atonement for the blight she had put upon his life, Nancy's spirit went to its Maker.

A ghastly film gathered over her eyes, and the waxen pallor of death spread over her face, but the features were quiet and peaceful, and in the flickering moonbeams that came in through the half-open door the lips seemed to smile. Despite its pallor, the face was more life-like than the ashen gray one that bent over it. He knew she was dead, but he drew her head closer and whispered close to her ear:

"Nancy! Nancy, speak once more, only once to Jim."

He looked eagerly into her face, as if he thought the pale lips would answer the appeal; and then the voice of nature's agony burst forth in a cry, half shriek, half groan. He laid the body on the ground, and throwing himself beside it, he dug his nails into the hard clay, and great, choking fearful sobs broke from him. Ah, Jim! could those who jeer at you see you now, they would stand with bowed heads before the unveiled majesty of a heart their puny natures could not fathom.

Poor Jim! Poor old Jim!

Hours passed and still Jim lay on the ground. His sobs ceased, but his fingers still dug the clay. His nails were torn and his blood mingled with the earth, but he did not feel it. The fire died out, and only the moonlight fell over the groveling man and the dead woman. Presently Jim arose. At first he staggered and grasped at the empty air. He stood still a moment, and then, keeping his back to the white, dead face, he went to the place where he kept his tools. He took down his spade and went out of the hut. The moon was sinking low and the tall trees were casting ghostly shadows. Jim went to the tree beneath which he used to eat his dinners in those long past days when he was building the hut. Here he dug Nancy's grave. The black hole frowned blacker in the deepening gloom. Jim laid his spade on the mound and returned to the dwelling. He stood by Nancy and gazed long on her face. This time no moan or sigh escaped him. An owl hooted above his head. The sound aroused him. He knelt beside the corpse. His face trembled, and he laid his cheek beside hers and moaned as a mother might over her child. He kissed her cheek, brow and lips, and then he rolled the blanket about her, and lifting her in his arms carried her out to the waiting grave. He laid her in, threw down the earth, and heaped up the mound, and then with a quick motion cast the spade far from him in the darkness. The moon had sunk behind the treetops and black darkness was fast settling over all.

Jim went back to the hut. Old Roan heard his

step and whinnied. Jim went into his stall. Roan rubbed his nose against him, but he got no answering caress. Jim put the little corn there was in his manger, took off his halter, and went out leaving the door open. He stopped a moment before the hut door, and then walked slowly back to Nancy's grave. He threw himself down upon it, and buried his face in his hands.

Saturday came round, and Jim was missed at the tavern. The men said:

"It's queer."

The next Saturday, and still no Jim, and curiosity, if not anxiety, prompted a party to go to the hut to learn the cause of his absence. They found the hut deserted, and poor Old Roan wandering about with a very disconsolate expression of countenance. They searched the hut and shed, but found no trace of Jim. They were cracking many jokes over his probable fate, when a cry from one of the party, who had been exploring the woods, stopped them. They hastened to him, and found him at the grave. They stood around it with pale faces and hushed breath. Prone upon the grave with arms out-stretched above it, as if in protection, lay Jim. We have said the place was not a cheerful one. Now it seemed a very charnel house to these men, and, after hurriedly scooping out a shallow grave beside Nancy's, they laid all that was mortal of great-hearted Jim, within it, and then very silently and quickly retired from the spot, and Nancy and Jim, slept on untroubled.

The Old Man's Story.

MEN talk about looking backward and forward over life, but it must be lonesome business, especially when the forwards don't throw much light on the backwards.

Well, I'm an old man—a very old man, come to think on it—but bless you, I shall be a young one again before I've half got that lesson by heart.

Somehow the years don't run away from me. The very youngest of them keep me company down hill most sociable. I see myself quite plain, a great hulking lad, seventeen years old, sitting in the old place at the village academy.

There's a new teacher coming—"a young woman to make you toe the equator," says the trustees; and I've got a pocketful of dried pease to fire at the stove-pipe, and Jim Hart, who sets next to me, has got the Falls of Niagara to construct out of stones and half a bottle of ink before she comes.

When she does, and walks across the room and faces us from behind her table, I've got one pea left, but somehow I don't fire it, and Jim, he mops up the Horseshoe Fall with the sleeve of his jacket.

Nellie Lawton—we know her name—don't look a day older than sixteen, and the color is a-coming and a-going in her face, and the spring air from the open window is a-blowing her soft hair. She tries to steady herself by one hand resting on the table, but the tremble all gets into her voice when she speaks.

"I hope we may have a pleasant school together; if you wish it half as much as I, we may, indeed."

She has more to say, but it don't come out, on account of the tremble. Jim winks at me.

"Easy time ahead—small cat, afraid of mice."

They don't turn out easy times for the poor little teacher. Every morning she comes to her desk with an eager look in her eyes, and every night she goes away, sorry and tired.

The old apple tree that got pretty much thinned out under the last master, sprouts out surprising this summer, and wickedness sprouts out of us boys just as fast.

When things are at their worst she says she must speak to Squire Hart, but she bears and bears beyond belief.

Well, one day I've cut Algebra and up stream fishing. Afterwards I hear how one of the worst lads climbed into a tree near Miss Nellie's window, and threw a kitten clean through it, crash on her table, and how she took up the scared thing, and stood up and blazed out words that stuck like needles into every boy in the room.

Well, I'm on one side of the log bridge fishing. On a sudden I hear a sobbing, and peeking under, I see our teacher's pretty head dropped into her hands. The worst boy couldn't stand such a sight as that, and though there's a big cat-fish tugging at my line, I don't haul him in, but just cut it and slip back to school, only stopping to pick a bunch of apple blossoms. She is fond of them, and I lay it on her table.

It's recess, but I manage to get the boys around me, and tell them how the little schoolma'am looked, sobbing at the bridge. We are sitting quiet at our desks when she comes in, pale and sad. She sees the flowers; she gives a quick glance around the room, and comes right down into the middle of us boys, a happy light shining in her eyes, a bright color trembling on her face—like no flowers you ever saw. Then she speaks the words our ugliness has kept back so long.

"Boys, I want you to be my good helpful brothers. A sister can teach many things, not in books, to her brothers. I do want to make order right to you. I want to make goodness and pureness of heart seem so beautiful to you that you will strive for them with all your might."

Ah, it's a great thing for a gentle woman to put her hand on a boy's arm and call him brother. There was not a boy of us that didn't feel as if virtue came to him from it.

It would be hard to make you understand the many

kinds of learning we got from Nellie Lawton. But for her, I'd never seen anything but griddle cakes in a buckwheat field a-blossom, and there wasn't a boy in Huntsville who used to see more than cider and apple dumplings in an apple orchard in June.

And Nellie,—well, some folks call it flighty to set such store by common things, but I take it as special kind in the Lord, seeing she had no home folks, to make His outdoors more a home to her than their chimney corner is to most folks. I'd like to know what to make of that queer sense that begins where the other five leave off. After all, it may be just the extra loving heart she had. You can't be friends with a buttercup, and on comfortable terms with the birds without having a tender feeling for them.

She took walks with us out of school, and we got to have a fellow feeling for all creeping and flying things. She put hearts into our eyes and eyes into our fingers. But, I could go on heaping up words, when one touch of her hand would tell it all.

So two years pass by, and school is out, never to keep any more in the old way. Nellie and I have been up to the pond for water lilies. The sun is up quite a piece when we get to them, and when we leave off picking, there's the moon like a round ball of silver, laying on the water, and the dark pads are rocking the half shut lilies like a tender mother.

We take our own time coming home. I take it

there's no better sight in the world than walking through sloping meadows, with the moon at your back, and the first star in the west nearer on a line with your feet than the little village down below. The sky so red under the star, and such a pale yellow over it, and sweet elderblow scents stealing after you from corners of fences. Ah, do you wonder that we take our time for it? Besides, it was Nellie and her scholar lad who scrambled up this path, but I come down a full grown man, because there's a kind little hand in mine, and somewhere in the world there's a home for me to make for a good woman.

You wouldn't have guessed it, but up there on that big rock in the upper meadow, where we stopped to braid the stems of the lilies, Nellie promised to be my wife.

That general home feeling in Nellie makes it easy to start for the West, and our pockets being low and our hearts high, we don't stop until we get where land's about nothing and muscle everything.

There's a long summer before us to build our house in and get settled. I get Nellie comfortably fixed at an old settler's and one fine morning I take her to see the first log of our new house laid.

"Five miles away from the nearest neighbor, dear," I say, a bit down-hearted for her, but she laughs merrily.

"No chance for you to run away from school here, Henry."

It's a different thing, taking your bride into a ready made house so fine and big that you get acquainted with your own children before you do with some of its crannies, from what it is to lay the foundation yourself, your wife drawing you down, hammer in hand, to kiss the corner beam in your little home.

It goes up steady and cheery, and by the time the first smoke puffs out of the chimney Nellie's garden looks like a prairie full of flowers squeezed into a back yard.

With woman's work indoors and man's out, and love to make light of both, we never stopped to think of being lonely till our first child comes to show us that the world was nothing like full. Another in good time tells the same story, but we planned for them when we built the five good rooms, and Nellie—her arms never seemed over-full.

Work opens the way to more work. There's new ground to be broken for crops, draining to be done, timber cut, outbuildings built, beginnings in the way of stock looked to.

I suppose a city man, coming home from work, don't have to look at his own door-plate, though there are a dozen more houses beside his after the same pattern; but when a man comes out of the woods on a winter's night, and under all heaven sees just one roof and a light from one window making a track to him across the snow, —what does home mean then?

Our first boy and third child was six weeks old that

night. (No longer the sweet confusion of times and tenses in the old man's story. What year was this that it should be dropped from the companionship of its fellows?)

Nellie would meet me here, she said, at the garden gate, at sundown, to show me how strong and well she was.

I brought the cows in from pasture earlier than usual, not to keep her waiting at the gate.

But she wasn't there, and that kind of pleased me—to think of Nellie's not being where she said she would. I leaned on the gate a minute.

The air was warm and still, but there wasn't a window open, which didn't look like Nellie. Her patch of flowers looked wilted, and I picked one to show her—but I didn't trouble her with it.

Our time for such joys as flowers stand for in life was gone by. I didn't turn to stone when I opened the door, yet there was my wife—my wife—crouched in the corner like a wild thing, and the baby at her breast was purple.

"Nellie!" I said. She was moaning and rocking herself, and then I saw the baby was not dead, but that she was pressing out its life in the arms God gives a mother to cradle her babes.

I laid hold of her wrists. If the boy's life had depended on it I couldn't have hurt her. I held her and looked into her eyes. That was as long as most men

would care to live—the length of that look. She shuddered more and more; her arms fell, and the child slipped into mine. Then I remembered that I was a father. Sometime in heaven or on earth my Nellie would ask me about our child.

So I left her and worked over him till I saw his little fingers fumbling in a feeble way, and the purple dying out of his face. Then I was free to go to her. I got hold of her wild hands, and held her to my heart, thinking the old place would seem homelike, but it maddened her into strength to fling me aside.

I can't tell it—not that part—my true Nellie was the gentlest woman that ever lived, and the demon of insanity is not strong enough to put anything more than terror and wildness into a pure, sweet soul like hers.

It's queer when a man's mind gets hold of bad news how it passes along inch by inch to his heart. My wife crazed, a six week's old baby, and two little women, the oldest just turned five. I believed the whole of it with my head, and less than half of it with my heart. That was an awful night, though after I'd given the little things bread and milk and heard their little prayers, and put such comforts as my poor girl might need in her reach, and got settled, with baby wrapped up in my arms at her door, and when along toward morning her breath came steady to my ears like music, it wasn't so bad.

There was no one in those parts who'd work for love or hire under the same roof with a "mad woman."

When it got noised about folks fought shy of us. They didn't find it convenient to pass by often, but that I didn't mind as long as we could keep together. I doubt if you understand what the keeping together meant—the woman's work to be learned and the man's work to be forgotten, or the most of it, all but looking after the cattle and fodder, and enough vegetables to make us sure of a meal.

Sometimes I took my boy out on one arm while I hoed the garden. It's surprising how I slipped into woman's ways. Sometimes I've thought I tried to do too much, but it's curious the feeling I had.

You know when a friend dies there's a deal of comfort in doing what he figured to do with us; and there was Nellie's awful eyes full of questions that her tongue could not speak in the natural way.

"Myra must learn to cipher soon, and Olive ought to know her letters," she had said before her mind went on its dark journey. So I set myself of nights to making copies and figures, with a little woman on each knee. Poor work I made of it to, with my heart in the room where she sat days and nights sometimes, with her hands clasped, and her mind a journeying in foreign countries that I'd have given worlds to have had a guide-book to.

But I kept braced up to the work by thinking to myself how proud I'd be when she came back, to show our little scholars, and how the old smile that used to

follow me like a streak of sunshine would bless me again.

For I never altogether gave up hope, not at her worst—not even when I turned sick binding up her poor hands that she had bruised against the wall when the terrors came on.

Between her room, that I had to keep locked mostly, and the general living room where, after the trouble came, I got into the way of working and eating and sleeping, there was a thin boarding, papered as neat as we could do it at building time.

You see I fixed her bed close to it on one side, and my cot as close on mine—nothing between us, looking at it one way, but a board, but there's other longitudes and latitudes than the school books tell of, and I used to lie awake trying to draw some line that would touch us two. Yes, I've laid there with baby's soft breath a coming and going in one ear, and his mother's voice singing low and talking wild in the other, till I've gone almost mad, and crawled away from boy's side, and out under the stars, fighting for the next breath.

Our little house always had room for our joy, but it choked me in my grief, and I used to rush out for a great breath of air, and find somehow, the sky too low, and the stars too thick, and the prairies too cramped. Walking up and down the fields so, fighting my trouble, I used to conjure up ways of calling her back.

The old flute that she liked and the boys made fun

of—I remembered that one night, and I said: “Oh! if I could make it speak in the old way in Nellie’s ear. Who knows—.” I found it wrapped up in an old lace kerchief of hers. If you’ll believe it, I laid down with it in my hand and slept like a baby. Somehow I could sleep—with a hope in my hand.

The day after I was in a fever to try it. I took it out to the potato patch, and between hoeing and tooting nigh forgot boy’s dinner. There wasn’t a human being right or left to call me a fool for sitting down right in the melons and potatoes, puffing and blowing at “Annie Laurie” and “Sweet Home” and “Land o’ the Leal.” Bit by bit they came back to me, or I went back to them, for I seemed to grow down to a boy again, and which was her voice and which the flute’s, I couldn’t have told. I made sure the sounds shouldn’t reach her until the time came.

The day worried by. I wasn’t as patient as I should have been, tucking up the children that night, and hearing their prattle, on account of such a hope and fear tugging at my heart.

At last I was free. I had the flute in my hand. I crept round the house, through the grass, to her open window, that faced toward the moon. It spread over the floor like a silver matting, and at the other end she was sitting, her white hands folded in her lap a-journeying.

The wind wouldn’t come at first, not a breath, not a sound. Then I grew strong; that flute played “Home,

Sweet Home," as if it was calling us both back to each other again. I hadn't touched it for years, but I played as happier lovers never play to their sweethearts.

She turned her head toward the sound. She got up and walked slow down the room—on the road home, I thought. At last—one hand resting against the wall, her lips parted. I seemed to hear the song on them. Where the flute got breath from to play on and on, I don't know, for I was getting ready to meet her at the journey's end.

Not that there was much getting ready to be done; her place had been kept empty and clean swept against her coming, always. She came quite close—the flute went on, faint, but on—till quicker than a thought, she struck it from my mouth, with that moaning sound that hurt me so, and that beating motion of the arms as if to put the world between us.

From that hour I lost heart. The whole night went by while I crouched under her window in the wet grass, with just one dull wish—to see her asleep, so I could cover her up like the children, and give her, unbeknown, one pitying kiss.

Nothing new happened that winter, except that the boy took sick, and I had hard work to bring him out.

The little girls were comforts—only a man who has tried his poor best to be a mother knows the sadness of such comfort. Besides their little studies, I took up a new one for myself. I sent for big medical books about madness. I pored over them nights. I got the ideas of

the wisest men in the world on all forms of madness. I weighed and considered them, and changed Nellie's food and treatment according.

You see I'd settled long before never to send her to an asylum. What love couldn't do—love ready to take lessons of science, and square its ways according—love such as mine couldn't do, nothing could.

When spring came, whether owing to my book-knowledge or not, she changed. The spells of terror came on seldom: a wishful look grew in her eyes that was harder yet to see. She walked about gentle and melancholy, as if she was stepping on graves. As soon as the days got warm enough I spent much of the time keeping watch on her while she crept through the woods by herself, picking her dress full of leaves and flowers, then throwing them all out and beginning over again. At other times she was so bent on something, she would walk over a bed of violets without seeing them, and lead me a tramp of miles, sometimes calling in her sweet voice: "Henry! Henry!"

The first time I heard it I sprang from behind the stump where I was watching her, but it wasn't me she wanted, that was clear. And I thought the name was just a memory come back to her, and was thankful only for the sound of it again.

Well the year ended at last. Just such warm, long days, just such sundowns, with the light slanting across the fields as when Nellie left me a year ago. The

time set me thinking. Was there one thing I hadn't tried! That look into a woman's heart, got in caring for the boy, put me on the track of the one thing I'd neglected. You see, with little Myra's help I had managed to keep him mostly out of her sight. Now what if she should come upon her baby suddenly? I wrapped him in a blanket—he was weakly for a fourteen months baby—and carried him a short ways into the woods, and laid him on the moss between the forked roots of an old stump. He was a patient boy always, with her eyes, and they looked up to me grave and wise as if they knew. Then I brought my dear out quickly from the house, as though for her afternoon walk, and left her not far from the stump, while I hid, as usual near by.

It was her flower day. She caught up her skirt, and threw in ever fern and leaf and bit of mossy bark in her way. I thought the boy was asleep, but pretty soon he gave a little cry. Nellie stopped and turned her head that way, but the thought of the flute lay like a stone on my heart. At the next little cry she dropped her skirtful of flowers and her wishful eyes devoured every leaf and shadow till they fell upon her baby.

Her face at that minute is a memory for an old man to take to heaven with him—the hunger all gone out of it, her eyes a feasting on that bit of ground. She went on tiptoe toward it, flushing like a girl, the motherhood deepening in her eyes, her mouth getting ready for kisses and lullabies, her arms yearning out to him.

She stooped for him. I had no fear when I saw how lightly and tenderly she handled him; how she bared her breast and laid his little face against it, and how their eyes seemed to feed each on each.

The Lord forgive me, but a wicked pain smote my heart in seeing how the mother-love was stronger than the wife-love. Just as I had planned to bring her home to my breast, she had taken the boy to hers. But it couldn't last alongside of such joy, and when I saw her moving softly toward the house, the blessed sun splintering on her through the trees, I turned my face to the sweet leaf-mould and thanked Heaven.

BABY VIOLET.

Sweet little messenger of love,
Thou, pure, pale blossom from above.
To earthworn hearts and vision lent,
Bearing a promise, Heaven sent.

Within thy gentle, tender eyes,
Earth saw the light of Paradise,
Celestial flowers, incense rare,
Still clings unto thy petals fair.

Among us this fair flow'ret dwells,
And through her childish grace dispels
Each cloud that shadows face or mood,
With winning arts of babyhood.

Little Joe.

HIS small body was crooked, but his large soul was straight—an arrangement much to be preferred to a crooked soul in a straight body. His poor warped body made your heart ache with sympathy, but the pure soul shining out of his pale face and pain-dimmed eyes, made you long to be like him. His was a beautiful face, with peace written all over it. The soul never uttered a word of complaint; but you could not help feeling it was greatly cramped for room.

It made the best of the crooked house in which it lived, but that it sometimes longed to move out you could discover when you saw that peculiar look of longing in little Joe's eyes deepen and his face glow as he read: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens."

From his mother he inherited his beautiful face and gentle spirit. His crooked back was caused by his father, though little Joe would never admit it. Crazy drunk the father came home one night, and when lit-

tle Joe ran to meet him; a cruel kick lay the little fellow limp and moaning at his mother's feet.

The wife never forgave him, but after the first few weeks of suffering, whatever of pain little Joe felt he kept to himself, and his gentlest look and brightest smile, he kept for his father. He seemed to realize that his father's mental suffering was almost greater than the thoroughly repentent man could bear.

Little Joe's body never grew after that, but his soul developed fast. His love for flowers, sunshine and music was intense.

It was wonderful how the little fellow's soul expanded in the next few years; and to those who watched him closely, it became evident that he must soon move out of that distorted body. As his limbs grew weaker, and he came nearer to eternity, his face grew brighter.

But one thing troubled him, and that was, who was to blame for his crooked back. For awhile this worried him until he remembered that eternity would reveal all the mysteries of this life; then he contentedly dismissed the problem.

It was a bright June day when little Joe moved out of his crooked house into one of the Father's many mansions. The cheeks of the watchers were wet with tears, but little Joe's face was radiant with the "light of Heaven."

A Dutiful Daughter.

IF the little stream which babbled and wound its shining way under the crazy planks of the little foot-bridge at the bottom of the Kenreath meadow had been endowed with speech, it might have whispered some very pretty secrets to the green rushes that bent over its margin and to the bright pebbles lying at its bottom during the sunny month of June 18—.

For every day somehow, pretty Darrie Morrison and John Kenreath met down by the little foot-bridge, with only the stream and the clouds, the grass and the flowers to hear and see.

That blissful time, when prudence goes to sleep—when the eyes are blind to all but one face, and ears deaf to all but one voice, had come to the pretty daughter of the Morrisons' and to the penniless young proprietor of the barren acres of Kenreath.

Kind Aunt Mary Morrison, living her simple life as usual, and dozing gently over her embroidery or lace-work, never for one instant suspected the truth.

She was glad to see Darrie so gay and happy—glad she did not tire of life with her at the quiet priory cot-

tage, but she never suspected why Darrie's eyes were so bright or why her sweet voice was so merry. She would remonstrate gently sometimes when the girl came flying in from one of the lonely rambles she was so fond of taking, with her curls flying and her hat left behind her very likely, and remind her that she was grown up now, and must not run about as she had done during her vacation visits from school. To Aunt Mary the foot-bridge was just so many old boards, mossgrown and worm-eaten, and not at all the glorified medium of communion which it was to this heedless couple.

True, both stream and bridge were within sight of the cottage windows, but the trees of the grounds were tall and thick, and had she looked ever so earnestly in that magic direction she would never have seen the meeting between her pretty niece and the handsome young owner of the surrounding meadow.

So the weeks went on until one day a letter came from Squire Morrison, Aunt Mary's brother, and Darrie's father. Aunt Mary read it with a cloud upon her usually placid face—a cloud that was still upon it when presently Darrie came into the room, singing softly and swinging her straw hat by its band from her arm as she fastened a bunch of red rosebuds in the bosom of her white gown. But she stopped at the grave look that met her from her aunt's soft brown eyes, and the blitheness died from her face.

"Why Auntie, what are you looking so solemn about? Is anything wrong?"

"Yes, my dear—that is, no." Aunt Mary hastily thrust the squire's unwelcome epistle into her pocket and blushed faintly. "It is nothing, love; but I want to talk to you, Darrie."

"What is it, Auntie? I want to go out."

"Are you going to walk this morning?" Aunt Mary asked.

"Not now—presently. It is not time yet."

"Time?" echoed her aunt. "Time for what, dear?"

"Nothing—that is, I mean I usually go later." The brightest, prettiest of blushes spread over the face of the girl while she made this innocent explanation; but Aunt Mary, fond and anxious, did not notice it. "What do you want to talk to me about Aunt Mary—anything very special."

"I have a letter from your father, Darrie. He is coming here."

"Oh!"—and a blank look of discomfiture and dismay succeeded the blush. "How horrid! What is he going to do that for?"

"My dear," her aunt remonstrated with shocked gentleness—"your own father!" Darrie tossed her childish golden head defiantly.

"Well, I sometimes wish he were somebody else's, although, of course it sounds very awful to say so. And is he really coming here?"

"So he says. He tells me to expect him sometime to-morrow."

"Oh, my goodness!" Squire Morrison's daughter cried ruefully, "and what is he coming for, Auntie?"

"To—to—see you of course, my dear," Aunt Mary replied hesitatingly. "You will be glad to see him, dear?"

"Oh, yes, of course," Darrie conceded promptly—"if he is in a more Christian temper than when I saw him last. He was dreadfully cross when I said goodbye to him, and wouldn't kiss me. But I suppose he feels better now."

"Yes, yes, love," her aunt replied hastily. "What made him so cross, dear?" she asked, saying of all others the very thing she did not want to say.

"Oh, you know!" and wilful Darrie tossed her saucy head, and stamped her small shoe very hard upon the floor. "That—that horrid wretch!"

"My darling child!" remonstrated her aunt, looking shocked.

"Well, but he is, Aunt Mary," said Darrie obstinately. "He's ugly, and bald, and fat, and red and vulgar, and I hate him!" viciously. "He is rich, and he made friends with papa, and he came to Morrison."

"Yes?" Aunt Mary looked down at the golden head, which had sunk down upon her knees and stroked it tenderly. "And then, Darrie?"

"Then he asked me to marry him," was the stifled answer.

"After knowing you so short a time!" cried the artled lady.

“He had seen me but twice.”

“And he had the impertinence—what was your father thinking of, child?”

“My father!” Darrie laughed, sprang to her feet, and drew up her little figure.

“He did not think it impertinent, Aunt Mary. He was angry because I said ‘no’—more angry than I have ever seen him. He told me I should marry Mr. Joseph Parkinson, and, when I said I would not marry a man almost as old as himself, and who was so coarse and vulgar, he laughed, and said Parkinson was a great deal too good for me, and that I should marry him whether I liked or not. But I won’t”—suddenly bursting into a tempest of tears. “I’d sooner die than marry that dreadful man, and if he dares to come here after me, I shall tell him so.”

A silence followed this emphatic declaration, and Aunt Mary’s soft hand stroked her child’s tumbled golden hair gently, while her eyes were bent with a troubled look upon the squire’s letter.

Her brother’s account of Mr. Joseph Parkinson was quite different, and in her perplexity she wondered which description was the true one. In Aunt Mary’s proud eyes the man did not exist who could be quite good enough for her Darrie. She asked presently, with her hand still upon the girl’s head:

“Did you say he was so ugly, dear?”

“Ugly?” echoed Darrie, turning around with an as-

tonished stare; "Oh no, Auntie? He is very handsome, I think. He has such beautiful eyes."

"Mr. Parkinson?" queried her aunt with dubious wonder.

"Mr. Parkinson!" The little lady sprang to her feet with crimson cheeks.

"Oh, I—I—didn't know you meant Mr. Parkinson; Oh yes, he is awful, Auntie—dreadful!"

"Well, darling, you must forget all about it now," her aunt said consolingly. "I must go and see about getting your father's rooms ready."

Wilful Darrie, making her way along the paths of the cottage grounds towards the point where the little foot-bridge spanned the stream, was very angry and very rebellious.

The squire's letter was an ugly break into the secret world in which she had been dreaming for some weeks past, and it had brought an ugly shadow stalking grimly behind—a shadow with the red face, loud voice and the obtrusive money bags of Joseph Parkinson.

"I declare, I have a great mind to tell him," said Darrie wrathfully.

She said it just as she reached the foot-bridge, and might possibly have carried out her threat but for the altogether unexpected absence of "him." Darrie's blue eyes scanned the broad green meadow keenly, and peered across it to where the solid chimneys of old Kenreath House rose against the sky beyond it; but no, there was

no sign anywhere of the tall figure in the shabby coat. He had absolutely failed to come. What next? The very craziest plank on the foot-bridge creaked and groaned as a small shoe was brought down upon it with great vehemence in a decidedly exasperated stamp.

"There, on this, of all mornings, he hasn't come!" she cried, aggrieved, and feeling intensely ill-used. "It is too bad, and I know he expected me to come because he made me promise. I declare, I've a good mind to go right back and never come any more!"

Here Darrie took another indignantly wrathful survey of the meadow with exactly the same result as before, and soliloquized again:

"Well, I don't believe he would stay away on purpose, after all. I'm sure he wouldn't. Perhaps he is bothered, poor fellow; he looked troubled yesterday. Some tiresome person wants to be paid or something, I suppose. I shan't be able to come to-morrow and papa might see him, and then he would make such a scene—I know he would!"

This last consideration was conclusive.

The dainty little figure in the white gown, with the red roses glowing on its breast, crossed the foot-bridge and tripped through the great meadow towards the gate which led out into the lane. "I'll just walk a little way, and perhaps I shall meet him coming," Darrie said to herself. But she walked more than a little way, reached the gate in fact, without doing anything of the kind,

and at that point she stopped, hesitating, peering half-curiously, half-shyly through the wooden bars. There came a little stretch of lane, and then, on the opposite side, the white gates of Kenreath, open as they mostly were, and beyond them the old house itself, a very picturesque, irregular erection of soft grays and dull reds, strong and sturdy, looking quite capable of sheltering a long line of Kenreaths yet.

"What a dear old place it looks," Darrie murmured softly, a faint little sigh heaving her red roses—"ever so much nicer than Morrison! Oh, my!" as two great raindrops falling upon the little hand grasping the bar of the gate, caused the little lady to look up with a suddenly scared face. A great sullen-looking black cloud hid the blue; the sun had gone in, the large raindrops fell thicker and faster, accompanied by a loud clap of approaching thunder.

This was awful. Darrie had plenty of courage, but she had also a mortal dread of thunder and lightning. She gave one frightened glance over the great meadow, another at the sky, and still another through the bars of the gate. There was but one thing to do, that was certain—the cottage was so far away and Kenreath so near.

In another moment Darrie had opened the gate, sped across the lane, and was running up the path as fast as her feet would carry her.

Now it chanced that John Kenreath was more weatherwise than Darrie, and having anticipated the

coming thunder storm, had made up his mind that it would be useless to betake himself to the bridge, thinking there would certainly be no chance of seeing his golden-haired divinity that day.

Having nothing in particular to do he did not go out, but was standing by the wide window in the great hall, looking dolorously out upon the drenched landscape when a rapid patter of flying footsteps sounded up the path, and he turned his head toward the open hall door as the little white figure, panting and breathless dashed in.

John made two strides forward and took two little wet hands tightly in his own.

"Miss Darrie!" he ejaculated.

"Yes," Darrie panted, clinging to his hands, and shivering as another clap of thunder rolled over the roof. "I didn't notice the storm coming up, and I had walked down to the gate in the meadow when it began to rain. And it was so far home, and so near here, I thought you wouldn't mind if I came in here, perhaps. Lightning frightens me, and I am so wet."

John cast a rueful look at her clinging white gown. "You will take cold," he said hastily. "You must come to the fire—there's one in the kitchen, I suppose. And he hurried her down the crooked passage into the great farm kitchen where a huge fire flared from the wide hearth.

Mrs. Jenners, with her sleeves rolled up above her

round elbows as she moulded cakes at a spotless deal table, dropped her rolling pin and stared in astonishment at the little figure in the wet white gown, with raindrops glittering upon its golden hair. John, eager and excited, pulled a great arm-chair before the blazing fire, and placed Darrie in it. Then turning quickly to the amazed housekeeper, he said:

"This lady has been caught in the storm, Mrs. Jenners. See to her, will you? Don't let her take cold, and make her comfortable, mind." And then, stooping to whisper in Darrie's ear that he would come back soon, he went out, to pace up and down the hall in a pleasant maze of bewildered excitement, and wonder if he were not dreaming.

Mrs. Jenners came out and called him before he had time to make up his mind on this point, and he went back to the kitchen to find Darrie, with a scarlet wrap folded over her white dress, and her little stockinged feet stretched out upon the fender, where a pair of absurdly small shoes were placed to dry. She looked very comfortable and perfectly at home, and she gave him the shyest, sweetest smile as he came up to her great chair.

"Don't I look very comfortable?" she asked him.

"I'm afraid you don't feel so," John said.

Only he himself knew how often, in sweet, vague, impossible presumptuous dreams, he had had visions of her sitting thus at his fireside. Now she was there in re-

ality, her blue eyes smiling up into his, and he felt more hopelessly put asunder from her than ever before.

For John Kenreath had never breathed a word of love to Squire Morrison's daughter. Of course she knew he adored her, he thought, and if, knowing it, it still pleased her to be gracious to him during these cloudless summer days, why, it was very well. No one would suffer but himself, when all was over. For John was afraid to read or believe in the story which her voice and eyes had told him, almost as plainly as his had told her.

Both were embarrassed by this novel condition of affairs, though both found it vaguely delightful, and perhaps this was the reason why their talk took a very practical turn.

It lasted until Mrs. Jenners after taking the last batch of cake from the oven, left the room, and then Darrie leaning back cosily in the great chair, said:

"What a dear old place! I don't wonder you are fond of it."

"Do you like it?" John asked surprised. "I thought you would find it dreadfully shabby and old."

"Shabby!" Darrie echoed. "I'm afraid you don't know my tastes very well, do you? Why I think it such a dear comfortable old place."

"After the cottage?" John echoed.

"Yes, even after the cottage," Darrie laughed, "but I was thinking of it as compared with Morrison.

"But Morrison is nothing like my poor old place, I should think," John said; "is it?"

"Indeed, it is not"—and the slim shoulders under the scarlet wrap gave a very decided shrug. "Morrison is very gloomy and dark and lonely. Oh, I mean it really! Morrison is dreadful. It frightens me with its great gloomy corridors, and darkened mouldy rooms."

"You don't like Morrison then?"

"I hate it!" said Darrie vigorously.

"And you would not like to live there, I suppose?"

"Live there!" cried this degenerate daughter of the Morrisons. "Why, I wouldn't live there for the whole world! I told papa so."

"You would say the same of Kenreath before long, I'm afraid," the master of Kenreath said, bending forward eagerly for her reply.

"I don't know. I might not—perhaps," said Darrie shyly.

It was decidedly a dangerous moment, and perhaps it was quite as well that the excellent Mrs. Jenners came in just then. Darrie sank back among her cushions, and John rose and walked over to the window.

Mrs. Jenners had stirred the fire and bustled out again fully five minutes before John turned from the window and came back to the little figure in the great chair by the fire.

"The storm is over now, Miss Darrie," he said quietly. "You will be glad to get home as soon as you

can, I know. I will send Mrs. Jenners to you," and with that he walked out.

He was standing by the road wagon with his hand upon Black Prince's mane, when Darrie came out with Mrs. Jenners in attendance, the scarlet wrap still over her shoulders, and from beneath the wide brim of her hat, showing a rather pale face. Without a word, John lifted her into the wagon, took his own place and drove off. And not one syllable, as they clattered smartly along between the dripping hedgerows, did these two say.

The gates of the cottage were reached, and John pulled Black Prince up, and getting out himself, gently lifted Darrie down. Then she held out to him a hand that trembled just a little; but instead of taking it, he pointed to a bunch of roses in the bosom of her dress. They were faded now—drooping, as if the storm had beaten down upon them.

"Will you give me those?" he asked her.

Without a word she held them out to him.

John took them and her hand with them, and for the first time bent and kissed it. He had never dared do as much as that before. Then he got into the wagon again, and Black Prince, startled by a sharper cut from the wip than he had ever received before, went clattering down the lane back to Kenreath; while Darrie with the hand he had kissed held softly against her cheek, was flying up the soaked gravel walk to the house.

The door was open, and she ran into the hall, pausing there for an instant. She wanted to get away and be quiet by herself somewhere, but she must see Aunt Mary and explain to her first, and, not giving herself time to think, she hurried across to the room door and pushed it open. Inside, she stood motionless and mute, the color dying from her cheeks—a fair little statue of amazement and dismay.

Aunt Mary was there, but she did not make her heart beat violently and guiltily with such suffocating force. No; there, looming large beside her aunt's black gown, was her father's tall figure, with its handsome lined face; and behind him—oh, a thousand times worse than ali;—was the red, common face, with its ugly leering smile, of Mr. Joseph Parkinson!

* * * * *

“I call the whole thing abominable, David—shameful! I knew you never cared for that poor child—I knew that when I took her off your hands—but I did not think you would ever stoop to sacrifice her in such a manner. How you can call yourself a father at all, I don't know!” Aunt Mary cried, winding up with extreme emphasis and indignation.

Miss Morrison was very angry, but then the squire was very provoking, and gentle Aunt Mary was doing battle for her darling Darrie, in defence of whom she would have faced without a qualm a dozen loud-voiced, reckless squires of Morrison. So, although she trembled a lit-

tle, she stood her ground bravely and flashed at her graceless brother as fierce and un placable a look as she could send from her kind brown eyes.

But the squire, although taken aback at the timid lady's defiance—was still not one whit abashed. Indeed, he smiled upon her in a bland and patronizing way.

"My dear sister, if only you would be kind enough to listen—"

"I don't wish to listen!"

"You would then understand—"

"That for your own selfish ends you wish to sacrifice your daughter!" struck in his sister, utterly declining to let the squire finish. "I understand that perfectly now."

"What do you mean by 'sacrifice'?" the squire said testily.

"Trying to make her marry that man—that vulgar, ill-bred, pompous creature, who is unfit to be in her company. There, it is of no use talking to me about it! I have heard quite enough, and I understand perfectly that you wish to sell your daughter to the highest bidder," Aunt Mary retorted angrily.

"Not so, not so, my dear sister," answered the squire. "You think I wish this marriage for my own sake? But my chief object is Darrie. You know my position. She owes too much to you already—a great deal too much," repeated the squire virtuously, "not a doubt of it. Well, what then? Surely

it's only natural that I should wish to see her well married. It would be a weight off my mind," added the squire, heaving a sigh.

"A man like that!" said his sister.

"A man with a half million, Mary, a cool half million."

"And old enough to be her father," pursued his sister, with gathering wrath, "and more vulgar than a plow boy."

"Well—y-e-s." And the squire flushed and winced under her steady gaze. "Of course I don't pretend that Parkinson is in all ways what might have been wished," he said. "He is not a Morrison, of course; he is not exactly an Adonis; and, as I have heard you remark, his manners are—well—are rather coarse! And, after all, gentlemen are rare nowadays—very rare!" The squire heaved a retrospective sigh, thinking possibly of the days when gentlemen were not so painfully rare. A pause ensued. During the past week the squire and his sister had held more than one conversation upon the same subject, and always in pretty much the same terms. Mr. Parkinson was not in favor at the cottage, although he came there every day, obstinately prosecuting his suit of the squire's daughter.

His coarse voice and ways, and his insulting admiration had not aroused one whit more indignation and repulsion in the breast of gentle, refined Aunt Mary than in that of poor, little, shamed, wrathful, helpless, Darrie.

He was a horrid man—and she wouldn't, couldn't, shouldn't marry him! This was all she said, trembling before the fierce look in her father's eyes, and at the harsh, dictatorial sound of his voice.

"Look here, Mary," the squire said growlingly to his sister, "what ails the girl? Most girls in her position wouldn't make such an everlasting struggle about taking a half million, you know. There must be some reason for it."

"She hates the man," said Aunt Mary, adding conclusively, "and I don't wonder!"

"She's welcome to hate him to her heart's content, so long as she marries him," Darrie's affectionate parent retorted. "The question is, has she picked up any love-rubbish down here?"

"Certainly not!" said his sister promptly, in blissful unconsciousness of the foot-bridge.

"And a very good thing, too, for marry Joseph Parkinson she shall, and the sooner she makes up her mind to it the better! He can't spend much more of his time fooling about here!"

"Darrie will never marry that man, do and say what you will!" cried his sister indignantly.

"She will do it, and pretty quickly too, or I'll know the reason why!" said the squire very fiercely indeed, and growling out a strong word or two with great emphasis.

And Aunt Mary, much shocked and offended, swept

out of the room without vouchsafing any reply. She waited in the hall for a moment or two, lingering outside Darrie's door, unwilling yet to meet her child's eyes; but Darrie's ears were sharp, and they heard the soft sweep of her aunt's silken train. She came out hastily, raising her blue eyes eagerly to the gentle face. Very pale she looked and very pretty, in her white gown, and with her lovely, golden hair rippling over her shoulders. She clasped her two cold hands round Aunt Mary's arm.

"Well, Aunt?"

"My darling!"—and she drew the forlorn little figure to her heart, fondly caressing the golden head. "It is always the same, Darrie. Your father will listen to nothing I can say. You must not mind it, dear; it will all come right," urged Aunt Mary tenderly, striving to believe it herself.

"He says I must marry Mr. Parkinson?" queried Darrie quietly.

"My dearest, you must not mind what he says," said her aunt helplessly.

"I don't," drawing herself away and raising her head proudly.

"Listen to me, Auntie. You are afraid that I shall give in. You need not be. I would never marry him. I hate, detest, and abominate him!" cried Darrie, suddenly losing all her dignity in a shower of angry tears. Then Darrie raised her wet face and began to laugh heartily.

“What geese we are, Auntie, don’t look so miserable, darling! I can’t very well be married against my will, can I? And I can’t and won’t marry that man Parkinson. And now I shall go out before that horrible man comes!” And with that Darrie gave Aunt Mary a loving embrace, and putting on her hat ran out into the sunshine of the garden.

Perhaps it was by accident, perhaps because she wanted to be quite out of her unwelcome suitor’s way, that her feet strayed in the direction of the foot-bridge. They had not done so since the day of the thunder storm, when John had failed to keep tryst. She had not seen him since—poor John!—not once.

Her feet were almost on the bridge before she remembered where she was; and she started and blushed, and looked round tremulously, afraid just then to see the handsome face and eager dark eyes. But she need not have feared; no one was in sight in all the broad expanse of green meadow. She was glad of that, so glad in fact, that she sank down on the thick grass that bordered the stream and began to cry.

How long she lay there, with her flushed face buried in the cool green, she did not know; but after her burst of tears was over she heard a step beside her, some one lifted her to her feet, and she sprang back with a wrathful little cry of repugnance. It was not John, as she had fancied, but Joseph Parkinson.

Whatever kind of a look it was she flashed upon him

from indignant blue eyes, it had no effect upon him. He leaned his head back and chuckled as he looked at her.

"Thought I should find you, Miss Darrie—told the squire I'd do it. You've led me a fine dance, though."

"What did you follow me for?" Darrie demanded, eyeing him disgustedly.

"I wanted to find you, of course. You don't think I came to this dead alive hole to talk to the old lady, do you?"

"I wish you would speak of aunt respectfully, if you must speak at all," she retorted.

"Well then, we'll call her dear aunt—anything to please you, I'm sure. You looked like a—what do you call it?—Water-nymph—down there among the grass—by Jove, you did! Could hardly make up my mind to disturb you."

"And how dare you follow me about, Mr. Parkinson?"

"Dare!" Parkinson chuckled, and advanced a little nearer to the small, scornful figure, with angry blue eyes and erect golden head. "Come now, Miss Darrie, don't you think we've had enough of airs and graces for the present? What good does it do, you know? If I had meant to take your 'No' I shouldn't have come here after you. But I don't mean to take it. Now don't you think you may as well say 'Yes' without any more shilly-shallying?"

His burly figure was close at her shoulder, but Darrie was silent, too intensely angry to utter a syllable; the beating of her heart seemed to suffocate her. Mr. Parkinson misconstrued her quietness it appeared. He bent his head closer to hers:

"Come now, Miss Darrie, you'll have to say it in the end, you know, and you may as well do it first as last. Or don't say it if you'd rather not; give me a kiss instead, just to mean it's all right, and I'll drive you over to Greyburn to-morrow and buy you the best diamond ring to be bought there for money—I will, by Jove!"

Growing bolder as she still stood mute, he put his arm around her waist and would have kissed her in another moment, despite her scream and sudden struggle, but for something unexpected which occurred just then.

There was a rapid rush across the stream which made the little foot-bridge rock; Darrie gave a louder scream than before, and Joseph Parkinson sprawled helplessly upon the ground.

It was a very tragic scene indeed; Darrie, as white as her dress, clung hold of John Kenreath's arm with both hands, rightly judging from his pale, fierce face and clinched fist that he might commit another assault if he saw any reason. And yet she felt inclined to laugh, for the prostrate foe, struggling and floundering among the bushes, did look ridiculous.

But as he got up on his feet he looked meeker than might have been expected. He glared at John over

Darrie's golden head not half so savagely as John glared at him.

"Who are you?" he said with a growl, wincing as he rubbed his bumped forehead. "How dare you knock a gentleman down, sir?"

"I never knocked a gentleman down yet, but you're about the worst cad I ever tried my hand on!" John said, his face reddening. "Dare! How dare you insult a woman, you coward?"

"It's no insult for a man to kiss his promised wife," the man said, chuckling, as he backed away. "I'd advise you to keep your fists in your pocket, you blustering young fool, unless you want to be run in for assault. All right, Miss Darrie, I shall tell the squire you said 'yes'." And with that he moved off among the trees; he was not sorry to get out of the reach of that brawny young fellow with the white face and fierce dark eyes, to whom Darrie was still clinging in desperate fright. But the little hands dropped as Mr. Parkinson disappeared, and she drew back, holding the hand rail of the foot-bridge and trembling violently; but her face was not so pale as poor John's. That parting Parthian shaft had literally stricken him dumb, and he could only look down in speechless misery at the little trembling white figure.

"I'm sure you hurt him dreadfully," said Darrie, with a nervous laugh.

"I wish I had broken his neck!" John retorted, vi-

ciously. "To see you insulted by such a man as that! I—but—" breaking off and drawing a deep breath—"I was forgetting. I ought to beg your pardon for my interference."

"Why?" asked Darrie innocently.

"I did not know he had the right."

"Oh!" breathed Darrie softly, looking down and plaiting a fold of her white skirt industriously. "You see, he is very rich, and—and—"

"And your father means to sell you to him, I suppose?" John said in a choked voice.

"Yes," came the faltered out answer—"that is, my father says I must marry him. You see, I am so poor."

"And so must have a rich husband, even though he is older than your father!" John said bitterly. "But I beg your pardon, Miss Morrison, I have no right to speak so. Only—well, I would rather see you lying at the bottom of the stream there dead, and myself beside you, that's all."

A silence ensued, a silence broken only by the rustle of the trees and the purling of the stream; then Darrie started and shivered a little, moving one step forward.

"Good-bye, Mr. Kenreath," she faltered, looking shyly up into his dark moody face.

"Good-bye!" said John coldly.

He would not look at her and would not touch the trembling fingers that she held out to him. She was so near him that he might with one movement have drawn

her into his arms and held her to his heart. But he did not. He had nothing more to do, except watch Squire Morrison's daughter go, he thought. But, being a woman, Darrie did not go.

"I shall often think, when I am gone away, of the stream, and the foot-bridge, and the forget-me-nots," she faltered wistfully. "The forget-me-nots will soon grow again now, won't they? I must have picked them nearly all."

"Good-bye," again faltered Darrie faintly. She held out her little shaking hand to him for the second time, and now John couldn't pretend that he didn't see it, and in common politeness he couldn't refuse to touch it. So he took it, and it lay quivering in his strong clasp.

"Good-bye, Miss Morrison."

"Good-bye," whispered Darrie, more faintly still, and glanced up, half wonderingly, as he let her finger go.

So far so good. The couple might have got over this highly decorous parting with all desirable dignity and coolness, but for that unlucky glance. But the blue eyes brimmed up as they met the dark ones, and poor little Darrie burst into tears, stretching out two little shaking hands imploringly; and John, forgetting all about the Mr. Parkinson, and caring nothing for the squire, caught the slender figure in his arms, and hid the sweet face against his broad breast.

"There—there, don't cry, my darling—anything but that! We had better be dead than parted, hadn't we? It doesn't matter what anyone says. Never mind the squire or that fellow either. He shall never touch you again. He shall never take you away from me now. I'll break his blessed neck if he so much as looks at you! Don't sob so, sweetheart, it only means that you and I are never going to say good-bye to one another, you know, that's all."

However, John said a good deal more, and Darrie let her sunny head rest against his broad breast with no great display of reluctance, and managed to answer very satisfactorily without saying anything at all. Perhaps it was an hour, perhaps only five minutes after, when John lifted the blushing little face toward his own, and looked down at it.

"My darling," he said, lingering fondly over every syllable—"my darling Darrie, what are we going to do now, sweetheart?"

"I don't know," murmured Darrie contentedly, ruffling her golden head against the shabby coat. "What?"

"Ah, that's what I wish I knew! What shall I do, Darrie? I wish I knew what I had best do, for your sake."

"Perhaps you wish that we had said good-bye, after all," she suggested demurely, glancing up from under her long lashes shyly into her lover's dark, adoring eyes, "do you?"

John laughed, and answered her satisfactorily, if not verbally, but, despite his intense happiness, he was feeling very much perplexed. Beyond the blissful present, there loomed up the threatening figure of Squire Morrison. Not that John minded for himself anything the squire might do or leave undone, but he did mind for her.

"I am so poor, you see, dear," he explained, tenderly drawing a curl of her golden hair through his fingers, "that even if there were no man with a half million in the way—confound him, I could hardly expect your father to give you to me. Could I?"

"Oh, no!" Darrie shook her head decisively. There was no doubt at all about that.

"And so if I go to the squire and tell him," John was beginning, when she checked him by a little scream.

"Oh, no—that would never do—you mustn't do that! He would just swear at you awfully, and take me away to-morrow to Morrison. Oh no, John; you mustn't say a word to him about me—not a single word!"

"Then what can I do, darling?" John asked, watching the sweet, earnest, frightened face. "Shall we tell Aunt Mary?" But no—Darrie shook her head at that too.

"I—I don't think that would be best, John dear," she said. "I think something else would be better perhaps."

"But what!" John queried anxiously.

"Well," Darrie faltered, blushing rose red all over her pretty face; "you—you—might run away with me, you know."

"My dearest!" John cried in eager excitement, and clasping her hands tightly. "Do you really mean you will do that, Darrie? It's the only thing for us! I have felt that all this time; but I did not dare ask you to do it. Oh, sweetheart, you shall never repent trusting me so, never! And now, what shall we do?"

What they were to do did not transpire, audibly at any rate, but there was a good deal of whispering by the old foot-bridge, a little laughter, and a large amount of nonsense—which was to this pair the finest wisdom in the world no doubt; and there might have been more but for Aunt Mary's voice, calling out, to know where the truant was.

Time had flown, for it was sundown and growing cool under the tall trees. Darrie sprang out of her lover's arms and turned pale as her aunt's silk train gleamed through the shrubbery.

"It is auntie!" she said hurriedly. "She mustn't see you. Yes, yes—I'll remember every word, and I'll come—I promise I will. Good-bye, John, and I'll do everything you tell me. Oh! here she is! Do make haste!"

And indeed there was hardly time for the hasty kiss with which they parted, for John had hardly disap-

peared in the shadow of a convenient hedge, before Aunt Mary appeared in sight.

"Oh, there you are, Darrie!" she cried in a relieved voice. "I really thought I should not find you. We were anxious about you. Where have you been?"

"Here, dear Aunt," said Darrie meekly. "What do you want me for?"

"Your father wants to see you," said her aunt, kindly.

"Oh?" Darrie stopped and gave a little gasp. "Where is Mr. Parkinson, Auntie?"

"He has gone. Your father is dreadfully cross about something, Darrie."

"No doubt of that," and Darrie, with more desperation than courage, ran into the house, across the hall, and pushed open her father's door.

Only the squire was in the room; and very fierce and terrible he looked, as the little white figure with bright eyes and flushed cheeks came forward and stood beside his chair.

"Do you want me, papa?" she said meekly.

"Yes I do, Miss! What's this you've been up to, eh?"

"Up to?" It was really no wonder she flushed painfully. "What do you mean, papa?" she faltered.

"Mean?" shouted the squire. "How dare you let some scoundrel of a ploughboy knock down my friend, Mr. Joseph Parkinson? Do you know he's got a black eye, Miss, and won't be able to show for a week?"

"How dare he insult me, papa?" cried Darrie, raising her head proudly.

Her father stared and laughed.

"Insult, indeed! What shall we hear next, I wonder! Some fine notions you've picked up, young lady! If the man who's to be your husband in a month isn't to kiss you if he chooses, who is, I'd like to know? Who's the young scoundrel that knocked him down, eh?"

"Mr. Kenreath!"

"And who is Mr. Kenreath?"

"A gentleman!" said Darrie loftily.

"Gentleman, indeed! Fine gentleman to make a man look as though he had been in a prize-fight, by Jove! But I know who he is. I asked your aunt, and the sooner he minds his own business the better for him! Pretty insolence, upon my word, to go knocking down a man worth half a million and blackening his eye. What next?" Darrie was stealing away in the direction of the door when he suddenly called her back.

"Come now, where are you off too? Didn't I say I wanted to speak to you?"

"I thought you had finished, papa."

"I haven't begun. Come back here and listen to what I say, will you?"

The squire stretched out his hand, grasped her little wrist in his grim fingers, and looked at her narrowly. But the blue eyes of his daughter looked steadily and

clearly back to him. She guessed what he was going to say, and knew what she would say in answer.

"Look here, Darrie," said he. "When I say a thing I mean it. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, papa,"—with charming deference.

"Very well. And you know what I came down here for, don't you?"

"Yes, papa."

"And what Mr. Parkinson came for?"

"Yes, papa."

"Very well, then. Now listen to me. I don't want any more nonsense over it, and he don't want any more nonsense over it. Consequently, you'll be married in less than a month!"

"Very well, papa," said Darrie meekly; so meekly indeed that the squire stared in astonishment.

"Oh, you have made up your mind to it, have you?"

"I—I think so, papa."

"And a very good thing too. About the most sensible thing you ever did in your life!" her father said approvingly. "You'll have all you wish for, and what more can you want?"

"Nothing," Darrie said softly.

"Just so—of course not," assented the squire. "And a very good husband into the bargain, mind that!"

"Oh, yes, papa."

"H'm! I'm glad you think so." Despite his endeavors to carry affairs off coolly, the squire was much taken aback by his daughter's entire change of front, and for a moment he looked at her suspiciously. "I'm glad you think so," he repeated. "You've more sense than your Aunt Mary, and know which side your bread is buttered. And you'll be a good wife to him--mind that too!"

"Oh, yes, papa, always! I promise you I will."

"And you won't show any temper and tantrums when you see him again, eh?"

"Oh, no, papa!"

"Well, there's a good girl," said her mollified father, releasing her wrist and patting her cheek. "You see how well we get on the moment you begin to be sensible. And, although of course he isn't a Morrison, still you'll never be sorry for changing your name, you'll find. And you'll be happy enough, no fear of that!"

"No, papa," Darrie assented softly. "I'm not afraid of that."

"Of course you're not. You're a sensible girl, and a very good girl, too. There, give me a kiss, Darrie, and then run away. I want to get off to bed. Good night, my dear."

* * * * *

The next day was very quiet at the cottage. Joseph Parkinson did not appear there; presumably he was nurs-

ing his injured eye in seclusion, and Darrie had such a bad headache she was unable to come down stairs. It was not much, she said, in answer to kind Aunt Mary's anxious inquiries—it would soon be better. No—she must not think of sending for a doctor—certainly not. She would be quite well to-morrow. And with that gentle Aunt Mary was fain to be contented. Indeed, Aunt Mary was more anxious and puzzled than ever she had been in her gentle life before, for the squire had not failed to recount to her his wilful daughter's submission.

“Wanted a little managing, my dear Mary,” the squire said patronizingly—“that is all! All women are alike in that way. I knew the wilful chit would give in pretty quickly when she found that I wouldn't stand any nonsense. Miss Darrie will give me no more trouble, you'll find. She shall be Mrs. Joseph Parkinson before the month's out.”

But the squire proved wrong.

The next day was not so tranquil at the cottage—quite the reverse, in point of fact.

Darrie did not come down to breakfast; and when Aunt Mary went up stairs to investigate the reason thereof, she found the pretty maiden bower of pink and white empty, and only the orthodox note pinned upon the pillow where her pretty golden head had lain.

Her aunt had no need to read the few faltering lines—which danced and swam before her startled eyes, and

she dared not be bearer of Darrie's penitent missive herself, but entrusted it to Rogers, and it was upon being made acquainted with its contents that the squire uttered such dreadful imprecations and flung his boot at the head of that faithful servitor.

"Oh, dear—how dreadful! I never was so shocked in my life!" Aunt Mary sobbed.

"I'll horsewhip that scoundrel within an inch of his life, and put that young hussy in a straight jacket!" shouted the squire.

"What for?" cried Aunt Mary, wheeling round sharply upon her wrathful brother. "You have only yourself to blame for it. How dared you attempt to make that poor child marry that abominable Parkinson? John Kenreath is at least a gentleman. And I would have done it myself!" cried the indignant lady, forgetting she was very angry with both delinquents. "And, if you are going to try to bring that poor child back, be pleased to understand, sir, you'll do it with no sort of assistance from me!" and with that the good lady swept out of the room, very pale and trembling with anger, to burst into sobs as soon as the door was closed, and her dear child's letter pressed to her quivering lips.

Half an hour later the squire, breathing vows of vengeance, took his seat in the carriage at the gates of the cottage, and red with fury and groaning, and cursing in a breath, was jolting over the stony roads in pursuit of his runaway daughter.

Now had the squire been a little wiser—he might have saved himself that uncomfortable journey over the jolting road to Greyburn.

He was too late to do anything but exasperate himself and vent his wrath upon the coachman—both of which he did plentifully.

Just about the time the squire started on his hasty journey, at a certain church in a quiet street in Greyburn, a young couple took their stand before the altar rails—a golden haired slip of a girl, who trembled a great deal, and a dark-eyed tall young fellow, who trembled not at all.

It was all over in a few minutes—and the young husband and wife walked out into the sunshine again.

John Kenreath and Darrie had run away in the least romantic fashion in the world. There had been no rope ladders, no jumping out of windows at midnight, in this particular elopement.

John had arranged all on the previous day, and Darrie had stolen down stairs just before the servants were up, joining her lover a little way down the lane, and they had driven quietly away behind the flying heels of Black Prince. And now it was all over, and the squire might just as well have stopped at home.

The young pair stood very quietly side by side in the sunny street for a moment, hardly realizing it all as yet. It was a very tremulous face Darrie raised to meet John's, clinging tightly to his arm as she spoke.

"Are we quite safe, John? Are you sure?" she whispered eagerly.

"Safe? Of course we are. Why—do you forget this already?" He touched the band of gold on the little white hand. "Doesn't that say you belong to me, sweetheart."

"I belonged to you without that," she said simply. "But I mean, John dear, if papa came, you know."

"He can't take you from me, darling. You're mine now." John said quietly.

"You are sure?" Darrie queried wistfully.—"Quite sure."

They were silent again; both hearts were beating in quick time, and words did not come easily.

John drew the little hand within his arm closer. "Let us go now, dearest," he said gently.

"Where are we going now, John?"

"Back to the hotel, dear. We will drive home to Kenreath then if you wish, dear."

"I hope papa won't get here before we start, said Darrie," glancing nervously about.

John laughed. "No fear of that, darling. He may not know it yet, and if he does he will know it is too late to stop us. Darrie, I wonder if, in the future, you will ever be sorry for this?"

"Sorry?" Darrie echoed, with wide-open eyes. "What for?"

"For running away with me."

"Why, it was I who asked you!" she cried innocently. "You know I did!"

"Yes, yes; but it was my fault. You have married a very poor man, my dear?"

"I ought to know it," Darrie responded, with a quaint little air of resignation. "You have told me often enough that you are poor."

"And you are not frightened at the prospect of living at poor old Kenreath, are you?"

"Of course I'm not! Oh, John—" and, blissfully regardless of passers-by, Darrie clasped both hands around her husband's arm, stopping to look up in his face—"don't you know that I was afraid of nothing in the world but their taking me away from you?"

They walked on slowly and gravely, too strange in their new position to talk in a commonplace fashion yet.

They were turning into the main street of Greyburn, when an ^{open} carriage came dashing along, the horses covered with flecks of foam. Darrie recognized it by a startled scream. The maddened beasts, utterly beyond the frightened coachman's control, swerved aside, the carriage gave a lunge sideways and threw the limp form of the luckless squire within a dozen paces of his daughter's feet.

* * * * *

"Does he seem any better, dear?" Darrie asked wistfully of her husband.

“Much the same, I think, darling. But he’s getting on all right.”

The place was the wide hall at Kenreath. The speakers, the young master and mistress of that abode, and the subject of their conversation was Squire Morrison. Darrie looked a little anxious, and John looked a good deal amused. He had just come down stairs, and things in the vicinity of the testy squire were lively enough to be laughable.

It was two weeks since the runaway wedding, and ever since then the squire had lain, bruised and sorely shaken, in the big front room at Kenreath. So short-tempered and restless a patient surely was never seen, or heard, for the squire, when awake, was audible from garret to cellar.

The squire had not the least notion of where he was. Had he known the truth, he might possibly have killed himself in the endeavor to express his feelings properly. He had been brought to Kenreath a couple of hours after the accident, and still insensible.

Mrs. Jenners was the best of nurses, and into her hands he had been confided; for penitent Darrie began to cry at the mere mention of leaving him in the hands of strangers. So the squire lay upstairs, utterly unconscious that outside his door Darrie would stand, clinging to her husband’s hand, and listen gladly, and yet half afraid, to the sound of his loud rasping voice.

Gentle Aunt Mary had come to Darrie as soon as

the news reached her, and she had kissed and forgiven her child. And she did not pity her hapless brother so much as she might have done, and utterly refused to see him until he should know the state of the case. What he would probably say and do when he did know made Aunt Mary tremble.

But as the second week drew to a close the squire grew better, and now John had just announced that "he was getting on all right."

"You're quite sure, dear?" Darrie asked.

"Quite sure, darling," John returned cheerfully, looking down upon the dainty little figure very proudly and fondly.

"It's all my fault, you see, dear," Darrie said heaving a little sigh. "But for me he'd never have done it, poor dear."

"It wouldn't have happened if he had kept his hair on," said John irreverently. "Why, darling, you're not sorry already that you belong to me, are you?"

"Oh, John dear, how can you think so! I was only afraid he'd die, you know."

"Die!" John laughed. "Not he! If you had seen him fling his medicine at the doctor just now, as I did, you wouldn't think there was much chance of his dying."

"Have you seen him?"

"Oh, yes! We had quite a conversation.

"Oh," cried Darrie; "what did he say?"

"Nothing—what should he? He doesn't know me from Adam. He has been asking me all sorts of questions, and I don't think I ever told quite so many fibs in my life. I don't think he entertains a very bad opinion of me," said John, his eyes twinkling. "He expressed himself much indebted for my hospitality. I'm going up to have another chat with him presently. He asked me. Don't look so doleful, darling. He'll give us his blessing yet."

And John proved right, for, in his headstrong, impulsive way, the hot tempered squire took a great liking to his handsome, dark-eyed young host. No one could lift and turn him as John's strong arms did, and nobody cared so little when he lost his temper. He got quite confidential, and one day started on the very subject John wanted him to talk about.

"A confoundedly stiff bout I've had of it," said the squire, "and all for that little chit of a girl!"

"I beg your pardon, sir?" said John politely.

"My daughter, sir," said the squire. "The little disobedient, runaway hussy! Eloped under my nose, sir—ran off with some confounded young clodhopper of a fellow. And she the last of the Morrisons too! I suppose you've heard about it, and know it was trying to catch them I came to grief, don't you?"

Oh, yes! John had heard about it. And he suggested, with due modesty, that John Kenreath was not exactly a clodhopper.

"Don't tell me, sir," said the squire, frowning.
"Poor as Job, isn't he?"

"Poor enough," John admitted.

"Of course he is, the scamp. And he ran away with my daughter. If ever I meet that young scoundrel, sir, I'll knock him down!"

"Just so, sir—I would," said John.

"I will," declared the squire.

"If you can, I suppose, sir," John suggested coolly.

"Can? We'll see about that. And I'll box my daughter's ears, I promise you."

"Wasn't there another side to the question, sir?" John said quietly. "Your daughter didn't run off with her lover for nothing, did she? They did about the only thing they could do, in my opinion. And after all, sir, you can't be sorry your daughter is happy with the man she chose rather than miserable with the man you chose for her."

"Parkinson was a queer customer for a girl, I admit. Poor little Darrie! Perhaps I was rather too rough with her. Only a little blue-eyed slip of a girl after all. As pretty a girl as one would wish to see. Never saw her, I suppose, did you?"

Yes, John had seen her.

"Oh, what did you think of her? Deucedly pretty girl, isn't she?" said the squire, almost gently.

"Very. You'd better forgive her, sir," said John, coming a little nearer, and looking down at the hand-

some lined face. "I know—that is, I dare say she is miserable over it."

"Serve her right!" said the squire. "So you thought her pretty, did you? You and she wouldn't have made a bad pair," looking up approvingly at the young man's broad shoulders and handsome face. "You remind me of what I was once. Now, if it had been you that she had taken a fancy to, I won't say I wouldn't have forgiven her."

"Although I had run away with her, sir?"

"Well, sir, let me tell you, a man isn't worth much who won't, in some instances, run away with his sweet-heart," said the squire, veering round with startling abruptness. "By Jove, in my young days, I should have liked to see the father that would have stood in my way!"

"Then you'd really forgive her, sir, if that were the state of the case, would you?" said John.

"Yes, I would, sir," said the squire decisively, and closed his eyes as if for a nap.

John opened the door and slipped out quietly. Outside Darrie was standing. John put his arm around her and drew her to the door. "Come in here, darling!"

"Oh, no!" She shrank back. "Not yet, John dear, please. I don't know what he would say to me."

"Ask him if he really means he will forgive you," John said, and pushing open the door, he drew her in.

The squire lay with his eyes closed, and the lines and wrinkles showing very plainly upon his worn face.

"Oh, John, how dreadfully he looks!" Darrie whispered.

"Yes, of course. He's been too ill to look very flourishing, you know. Don't cry. You'll make him think you're sorry for what you have done."

Darrie would doubtless have repudiated this charge, but just then the squire opened his eyes. Her face was not far from his own and he gazed as if petrified. John quietly put his arm around his wife's waist, and drew her to his side.

"What's this?" gasped the squire. "Darrie?"

"Yes, papa," said Darrie meekly.

"And who's that? Who may you be by this time, sir?" cried he frowning fiercely.

"John Kenreath, sir," answered John promptly. "You said you would forgive us, you know."

"And you will, won't you, father dear?" Darrie besought eagerly. "I couldn't help it, I—I loved him so much, you see."

"Well, I'll be—blessed!" said the squire.

Somewhere in his rough breast the squire had a heart, and it was softened now as his daughter's arms were clasped round his neck, while she rained down tears and kisses upon his pale face.

So he kissed her too, and, as she drew back to her husband's side, he did not survey them so implacably after all.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, young man!" he demanded.

"Not I, sir. 'A man isn't worth much who won't in some instances run off with his sweetheart,' you know. All I can say is that I'm uncommonly glad I ran off with mine."

"And you, young lady?" said the squire, his eyes twinkling.

"Not a bit ashamed, papa," said Darrie stoutly, laying her golden head softly against her husband's sleeve. "I'd do it again to-morrow if John asked me."

"And expect me to forgive you, eh? Just as you do now?"

"But you have forgiven us, you know, father dear," said Darrie smilingly.

AUTUMN.

There's a beautiful spirit breathing now
Its mellow richness on the clustered leaves,
As Autumn with her sparsely silvered brow
Gathers the rich profusion of her sheaves.

Waves of bright color flood the earth around,
Pouring new glory on the autumn fields.
The waning year's full fruitage strews the ground,
And "Old Jack Frost," his chilling scepter wields.

They who with grateful hearts go forth to look
On duties well performed, and days well spent,
Shall find and read, as in an open book,
The language of a new and sweet content.

MY BOY.

Don't send my boy where your girl can't go,
For boy or girl, sin is sin you know,
And my baby-boy's hands are as soft and white,
And his soul is as pure as your girl's to-night.
Don't open the way to haunts of sin,
Gilded without, but most foul within,
Like towering monuments of shame,
Reproaching their owner's lust for gain.
Don't teach him that men are licensed free,
To reject their claim to chivalry.
Teach him to be manly, gentle, kind,
With a heart of gold,
And a courage bold,
That is born of a clean and pure mind.

LITTLE BLUE EYES.

Little maid with golden hair,
Eyes so blue and face so fair,
What will all thy future bring?
What of joy, and grief, and pain.
May life's cares rest light on thee,
May God's love encompass thee,
May He keep thee pure as now,
Innocent thy heart and brow.
Bless thee, bless thee little one,
The joy, the light within my home.

CHILDHOOD'S HOME.

'Tis a small brown cottage neatly trellis'd
Stands out in my memory sweetly clear,
With a wealth of vine and bloom embellish'd,
And its lattic'd windows in front and rear.

As seen in fancy the quaint old roof-tree,
Still rings with the shouts of our merry band,
Our hearts attuned to its rustic beauty,
Our lives touched to glory by nature's wand.

MAMA'S MAN.

Little man with willing feet,
Truthful eyes and red lips sweet,
Eager, helpful, wee, brown hands,
Cheerfully meeting all demands.

Waiting, wishing, time so slow,
Would make haste, and faster go;
So anxious is he to grow—
Big like papa dear, you know.

I will work, mama, for you,
Earn such lots of money, too,
I will help you all I can,
I'll be always mama's man.

Heaven bless thee, mother's man,
Mould thy life on Christlike plan,
Pure and steadfast as you go,
God's own image here below.

THE NATION'S DEAD.

The Nation's Dead. On every hand the sacred mounds arise
Silently speaking to passers-by of leal hearts' sacrifice;
We do them honor each May-day with flowers and music
sweet,
And quiet churchyard walks resound with the tread of
martial feet.

Our country called and loyal sons responded to her need,
Men staunch and true, valiant ones, able and willing to
lead.
Onward to death marched our "Boys in Blue" amid shot and
shell.
Knightly in deed and true in heart, facing the foe they fell.

Many a well-loved son went forth, only a boy in years,
O mother-hearts that bade God-speed amid thy falling
tears,
And daily watched with anxious thought for news from far
away,
Praying and waiting, a woman's part, this silent struggle
alway.

Some lie asleep in unknown graves, in a fair Southern land,
But angel forms keep watch and ward o'er every soldier
band;
And "God's Recording Angel" keeps the record pure and
bright,
How fell the brave in that dread time of battle for the
right.

Honor our "Boys in Blue," and remember the "Boys in Gray,"

Who just as freely gave their lives in every sad affray;
Forget their loyalty to those who threatened freedom's laws,
The soldier paid the ransom for the leaders of the cause.

A grateful country claims them now—the "Gray" hath donned the "Blue,"

The call, "To Arms!" won quick response from Southern hearts and true,
America need fear no foe, while we united stand—
No North, no South, no East, no West,—One God, one Flag, one Land.

Soon may the white-winged "Dove of Peace" rest upon folded wing,

And from the ashes of the Past, new light and impulse spring,
Until the "Dark Phantom of War" in every land shall cease,
And man's emancipation come through Earth's united Peace.

INNISFALLEN.

Bright gleams beneath the setting sun
A burnished sheet of molten gold,
As Lake Killarney rippling on
Its magic beauties doth unfold.

Above Killarney's silent bed,
Fair Innisfallen rears her crest;
While o'er all, Fiman's Abbey dread,
Bares to the blast its rugged breast.

Standing with grim undaunted face,
Its crumbling ruins guarding well
The mystic lore of ancient race—
Here old historic legends dwell.

Fast sentineled by moss-grown rock,
Withstanding nature's mighty sway,
Bearing her changing mood and shock,
As none but grand old ruins may.

Fair Innisfallen, sacred Isle,
St. Fiman's Abbey, gray and hoary;
Thy stately oaks stand guard the while
The sun-god bows his head before thee.

NOTE.

Innisfallen is the most historic and beautiful of the Killybeg Islands. At St. Fiman's Abbey, founded more than three hundred years ago, were compiled the famous "Annals of Innisfallen," begun in the eleventh century and chronicling the world's history from the beginning, and that of Ireland from 430 A. D., down to the thirteenth century.

To the lover of the beautiful, it offers an exquisite combination of pebbly beach, grassy slope, and shady groves of majestic oaks, through which the sunlight filters upon the velvet sward, while the smooth waters of the lake in which it seems to float, mirror and multiply its charms.

HOW LONG.

My mother, how long must the silence keep
Your pure soul from mine in the last long sleep?
The way is so long, and the journey, dear,
Hath taken full many a weary year.
Yet, perchance the meeting may sweeter be,
For the long, long silence 'twixt thee and me.

I dream thou art near me. My glad eyes trace
The lineaments fair of thy well lov'd face;
Thou dost clasp me close in my dreams of thee,
How I long for the arms that enfolded me.
For the tender touch of lips that smile above,
For thy sweet whispered words of mother-love.

PRAYER.

Prayer, the sweet unspoken longings of the soul,
Beyond all mortal ken to fathom or control.
Prayer, the awful cry of anguish and despair,
From sin-soiled lips so long unused to prayer;
But ever heard and registered above,
By Him whose every attribute is love.
Prayer, the soft lisp of innocence at night,
From pure child lips and souls so white—
God keep them safe from sin and stain,
Keep each and all who name thy name.

OLD MEMORIES.

Three pairs of blue eyes, brighter I ween,
Than cloudless blue of summer skies;
Soft, sunny hair of a golden sheen,
Sweet faces so charming and wise.

Bird-like voices in silvery notes,
Caroling happy childish glee,
Sweetly pealing from baby throats,
Recalling life's spring-time to me.

I, silent, listen, and softly sigh,
As recollections, ever dear,
Now pass in succession swiftly by,
And old memories bring a tear.

SUNRISE.

Morn on the mountain like a summer bird.

Lifts her bright wing toward the rising sun.
Still life awakes, the noise of day is heard,
Time chronicles another day begun.
'Round lofty pinnacles with shifting glance,
To share the brunt and battle of the day,
The "Sun God," now marshalls his trusty lance,
Massing with martial tread their bright array,
They gather midway round the rugged height,
Like battle hosts swift gathered through the night.

MY KING.

God created me a woman,
 With a nature just as true
As the blue eternal ocean—
 As the sky that is over you.
Love came—and it seemed too mighty
 For my troubled heart to hold;
It seemed in its sacred glory,
 Like a glimpse through the Gate of Gold.
Like life in the perennial Eden,
 Created, formed anew—
This dream of flawless manhood
 That is realized in you.
And you are mine until your Maker calls you—
 Your soul and your body, Sweet!
Your breath and the whole of your being,
 From your kingly head to your feet—
Your eyes and the light that is in them—
 Your lips with their maddening wine—
Your arms with their passionate clasp, my king—
 Your body and soul are mine.
No power, whatsoever,
 No will but God's alone,
Can take you from my keeping;
 You are His and mine alone.
I know not where, if ever—
 I know not when or how
Death's hands may try the fetters
 That bind us here and now;

But some day when God beckons,
Where rise his fronded palms,
My soul shall cross the river
And lay you in his arms.
Forever and forever, beyond the Silent Sea,
You will rest in the Arms Eternal,
And still belong to me.

SLUMBER SONG.

Rock-a-bye, my baby dear,
Tender blue eyes, shining clear,
White lids droop, we'll rock-a-bye
Into Sleep-land, you and I.
Hush my baby, darling rest,
Cuddled in your white, wee nest.

Hush my baby, hush! and sleep,
Mother's eyes will safe watch keep,
Mother's love, the moments through,
Shall be bending over you
Bylow baby, sleep and rest,
Sheltered in your tiny nest.

Sleep, my baby, have no fear,
Never harm shall reach you, dear,
Never touch or breath so small
On your little face shall fall.
Sleep my baby sweet, and rest,
Safe within the dear home nest.

BURNS.

No modern poet's lilting lays
Picture to us those "bonnie braes",
Where "Afton Water's" limpid flow
Steals through the heather soft and slow.
Fair mother earth's bright jewels rare,
Were garnered in his tender care.
To nature's heart he closely clung,
Frae simple themes his lyrics sung.

No later songsters' happy strain
Stirs hidden chords of tender pain,
For he who knew the hearts of men
Hath passed beyond our mortal ken.
Yearning for days of "Auld Lang Syne",
That shadowy, long vanished time;
Old Scotia's loyal heart still mourns
Her bonnie bard, puir Robbie Burns.

APPRECIATION.

And so she slept while the neighbors came
To the saddened house that day,
In softened tones they named her name,
In a kind and tender way,
And not even one but through her tears,
Spoke gently some loving word,
She'd thoughtlessly kept within for years—
But the dead—she never heard.

Then they brought her flowers, rich and rare
Breathing their sweetest perfume,
And wreaths of roses everywhere
Made bright the darkened room.
I thought of her life—its sorrow spent,
And the great, glad joy, if she
Could see the tokens of love they sent—
But the dead—she could not see.

A WINTER SCENE.

Circling dizzily to and fro,
Merrily gliding and glancing:
O'er old earth falls the gleaming snow,
Each winsome flake madly dancing.

Covering o'er with mantle white,
All the dark, unsightly places,
Robing nature in vesture bright,
Brightening sad hearts and faces.

Each withered stock and leafless tree,
Outlines a vision of delight
Each tiny knoll, the shrubbery,
Lies sparkling 'neath God's clear sunlight.

The rarest gems cannot exceed,
The wealth of splendor we behold,
When from their cloudy pinions freed,
Fall crystal beauties manifold.

THE SILENT ACRE.

Within God's Silent Acre,
Our quiet lov'd ones sleep,
While o'er each holy grassy mound
The Angels watch doth keep.
To and fro as the ages go,
As a shepherd guardeth his sheep,
Softly singing to tireless ears
The beautiful song of sleep.

For old and young this slumber song,
Tenderly, lovingly sweet,
Beguiles the hours, as leaves and flowers,
Its soft, soothing notes repeat.
And God who loveth his own the best,
Folds them unto his loving breast.
Sleep God's children and take your rest,
Sleep, oh weary ones, sleep.

RETROSPECTIVE.

Beside the warm hearth's cheerful glow,
I sit sad and alone—When lo!
I dream that faith and hope are mine,
I live again the old, glad time,
When life was sweet, and love sublime.

The dream grows brighter. Again I see
Her dazzling face upturned to me,
Breathing fond vows of fealty,
Soft, clinging arms enfolding me,
Only a dream—it cannot be!

One lingering glance from lovelit eyes,
The fairy picture fades and dies,
And life's realities loom through,
While hazy mists obscure the view
That my dream fancy mirrored true.

MONOPOLISTIC MONOLOGUE.

Let us corner up the sunbeams,
Lying all around our path;
Get a trust on wheat and roses,
Give the poor the thorns and chaff.
Let us find our chiefest pleasure
Hoarding bounties of the day,
So the poor will have scant measure
And two prices have to pay.

Yes, we'll reservoir the rivers,
And we'll levy on the lakes,
And we'll lay a trifling poll-tax
On each poor man that partakes;
We'll brand his number on him,
That he'll carry all through life,
We'll apprentice all his children,
Get a mortgage on his wife.

HEARTH-SIDE SKETCHES

We will capture e'en the wind-god,
And confine him in a cave,
Then through our patent process,
We the atmosphere will save.
Thus we'll squeeze our poorer brother
When he tries his lungs to fill,
Put a meter on his wind-pipe,
And present our little bill.

We will syndicate the starlight
And monopolize the moon,
Claim royalty on rest days,
A proprietary noon,
For right of way through ocean's spray
We'll charge just what it's worth,
We'll drive our stakes around the lakes;
In short, we'll own the earth.

BETHLEHEM.

As Shepherds watched their flocks by night,
An angel host with garment bright,
Proclaimed a Saviour unto men,
The Holy Babe of Bethlehem.
A multitude of angels sang,
Glad praises o'er the hillside rang.
The Christ, our Lord, is born this night,
Behold through him celestial light
Shines out upon the rugged way
Trodden by earth's weary day by day.
Glad tidings of great joy we bring,
The great redemption song we sing.

Peace and good will on earth shall reign.
Ring out ye hills the glad refrain,
Ring doom to selfishness and greed,
Sweet sympathy to others' need.
Ring ye God's proffered Fatherhood,
Enjoins to all men brotherhood.
Adown the vanished years of time,
Has come the echo of that chime;
And Christ, our Lord, anew is born
To loving hearts each Christmas morn.

META VAUGHAN.

The meeting of the waters, the Shannon broad and fair
Have each their melody of love, of sorrow and of care.
They fill my heart with rapture, with memory and song,
For love will ever call me to the valley of the Laun.

The valley of the Laun, the valley fresh and green,
The valley of 'he Laun where first the flowers are seen,
The valley and the river gliding swiftly on,
The valley and my darling, sweet Meta Vaughan.

'Twas as a boy I loved her, she was all in all to me,
Yes, Meta was my star of hope, my little bride to be.
For her I'll toil for wealth and fame, the world I'll wander
lone,
And when the storms have crossed my path, will claim
her as my own.

Misfortunes come and go like clouds that float above,
But what have I to fear if I've the light of love;
With Meta, darling, waiting, my troubles all are gone,
Life is but a dream of hope, for thee, Meta Vaughan.

CHORUS.

The pride of the valley, the flower of the Laun,
My own little Colleen, sweet Meta Vaughan,
A bright light of glory ever beyond,
The love of the Shamrock, and sweet Meta Vaughan.

THE TOMB BESIDE THE HUDSON.

I must tell you of a river,
Winding downward on its way,
From the hills that rise in grandeur,
Stretching northward far away.

Tree crowned hills like giant soldiers,
Guarding well the fertile fields;
Laden with the choicest fruitage,
Nature in profusion yields.

Far above the grand old river,
With its treasures all their own,
Rocky palisades, and highlands,
Walls of grim, unyielding stone.

Standing guard throughout the ages,
Sentineled above our dead,
Resting now across the river,
In his massive marble bed.

While below as if in homage,
Wave and river's solemn chant
Breathes a requiem thanksgiving
For the soldier hero, Grant.

STERLING CASTLE.

Crowning the craggy, rugged height,
Old Sterling Castle greets the sight.
Its stately battlements rear high
Their grim, gray turrets toward the sky.
Below it lies the battle plain,—
Here Scottish blood in a crimson flood,
Bathed the dead heroes slain.
Here Bruce led Scotia's bravest on,
At Bannockburn his cause was won.
Here Wallace led his gallant van,
In fiercest conflicts known to man.
Both James the II first saw the light,
And James the V from this fortress site;
And years ago its dungeon dread,
Echoed the sound of Rob Roy's tread.
'Twas here Black Douglass felt the dart
Of the cruel dagger in his heart.
Here knight of joust and tournament,
On daring deeds or valor bent,
Wended their way with laughing jest
To stirring scenes of wild contest.
To-day its moss-grown walls of stone,
With shrub and creeper overgrown,

Re-echo to the martial tread
Of Highland sentries overhead.
The battle-plain--its war-like scenes,
Seem but a fancy known in dreams;
Valley and river winding down,
Lie smiling 'neath old Sterling's frown.

NOTE.

Sterling Castle is connected with the most important historical events of Scotland prior to her union with England. It stands upon a rocky height 220 feet above the plain, overlooking twelve battle fields. Here, at Bannockburn, Bruce gained the independence of Scotland; it was the scene of Wallace's fierce contests, and a favorite spot for the joust and tournament. In this Castle James II and James V were born. Rob Roy was confined in its dungeons and here James II stabbed the Earl of Douglass. These grand historical associations add greatly to the charm of the place, yet it would be interesting without them, so charmingly picturesque is the landscape, with its rivers and mountains.

A Highland regiment is now quartered within its walls.

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